

## Durham E-Theses

---

### *Palestinian 'identities' in Athens : negotiating hybridity, politicisation and citizenship*

Mavroudi, Elizabeth

#### How to cite:

---

Mavroudi, Elizabeth (2005) *Palestinian 'identities' in Athens : negotiating hybridity, politicisation and citizenship*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online:  
<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1793/>

#### Use policy

---

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.

---

Academic Support Office, Durham University, University Office, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HP  
e-mail: [e-theses.admin@dur.ac.uk](mailto:e-theses.admin@dur.ac.uk) Tel: +44 0191 334 6107  
<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk>

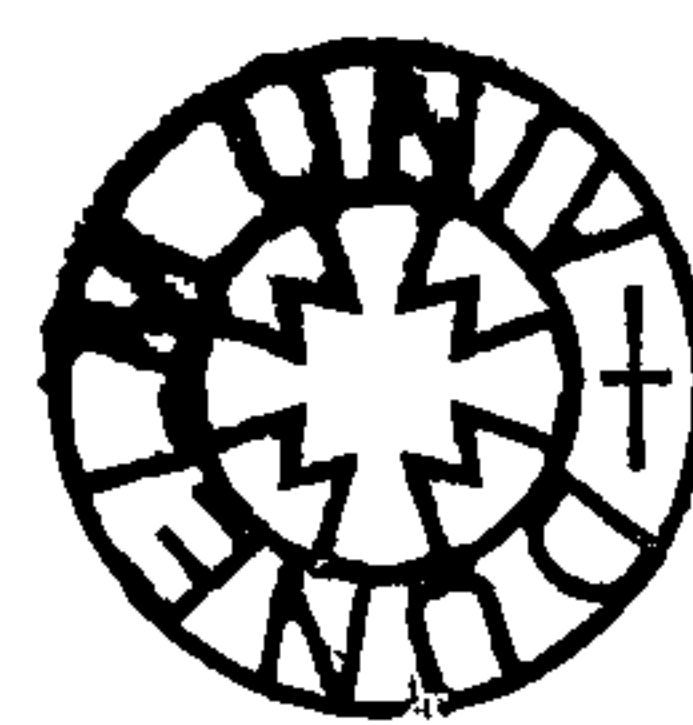


# **Palestinian ‘identities’ in Athens: negotiating hybridity, politicisation and citizenship in diasporic spaces**

Elizabeth Mavroudi

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD  
Geography Department  
Durham University  
2005

**The copyright of this thesis rests with the  
author or the university to which it was  
submitted. No quotation from it, or  
information derived from it may be published  
without the prior written consent of the author  
or university, and any information derived  
from it should be acknowledged.**



**0 5 MAY 2006**

**Palestinian 'identities' in Athens: negotiating hybridity, politicisation and citizenship in diasporic spaces**

*Elizabeth Mavroudi*

**Abstract**

Cross-border connections may be making the identities of those in diaspora more fluid, hybrid and 'in-between' as they actively strive to maintain symbolic and material links to their territorial homeland. However, the political project of those with a cause to advocate and who represent themselves as a 'united' entity with a defined 'identity' may mask underlying tensions and ambivalence about notions of home and belonging, which may in turn, influence political actions such as advocacy. Using in-depth qualitative research on the Palestinian diaspora in Athens carried out over a period of nine months in 2003-4, this thesis explores how Palestinians dynamically negotiate identities that are politicised but inseparable from cultural and social facets of their lives. It reveals that the Greek support they receive, their cross-border connections, statelessness and perceptions of suffering and injustice because of exile and displacement have triggered the need to advocate self-determination and political as well as cultural 'unity'. At the same time, because they are a diverse group of people who often have complex citizenship status and difficulties travelling, their propensity to be politically active is shaped by the fact that their lives are grounded in Athens subject to both uneven power relations and a lack of access to formal political spaces. The thesis demonstrates that although Palestinian involvement in informal (but contested) diasporic spaces encourages processes of 'helping' and advocacy, contradictory feelings of hope and despair, resistance and apathy are commonplace, as they feel attached to and isolated from the homeland, politically and culturally. It also illustrates that there is a decoupling but also coupling of citizenship and 'national identity', depicting the changing relationships between territory and 'identity' that need to be examined so that citizenship can be made more relevant to those with ambiguous or difficult relations to the state.



## Contents

	Acknowledgements	vi
	List of figures	vii
	List of appendices	viii
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	Contextual information	5
	Outline of thesis	32
<b>2</b>	<b>Theoretical perspectives: debating notions of diaspora, hybridity, postcolonialism, ‘identity’ and nationalism</b>	<b>33</b>
	Cross-border connections: grounding the global	33
	Postcolonial perspectives	37
	Interrogating diaspora and transnationalism	45
	Problematising nationalism	52
	Debating ‘unities’: tensions and representations	58
	Citizenship and political participation	63
	Diasporic spaces	65
	Geography, politics and diaspora	67
	Combining geographical, postcolonial and diasporic perspectives	68
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodologies</b>	<b>72</b>
	Research Questions	
	Research design: practicalities of implementation	72
	Ethics, representation and positionality: issues and realities	82
<b>4</b>	<b>Negotiating ambivalent ‘Palestinian-ness’: home, belonging and hybridity</b>	<b>92</b>
	Introduction	92
	Where is home? Memories and stories of Palestine	94
	Negotiating the realities of everyday hybridity in diaspora	111
	The use of domestic space and symbolic artefacts in constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’	128

	Conclusions	136
<b>5</b>	<b>Constructing strategic ‘Palestinian-ness’: evoking ‘shared consciousness’ and dealing with difference</b>	<b>139</b>
	Introduction	139
	Political constructions of ‘unity’, ‘identity’ and the homeland	141
	Learning to be Palestinian	149
	Articulating and debating differences: tensions and conflicts	158
	Conclusions	181
<b>6</b>	<b>Perceptions of the coupling and decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’</b>	<b>183</b>
	Introduction	183
	Coupling citizenship and ‘national identity’: consequences of the material realities of statelessness and perceptions of injustice	189
	Palestinian acquisition of formal citizenship: the decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’	210
	Strategic ambivalence: the coupling and decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’	219
	Conclusions	230
<b>7</b>	<b>Processes of resistance and advocacy within diasporic spaces</b>	<b>232</b>
	Introduction	232
	Outlining Palestinian advocacy as ‘helping’	236
	Cultural events and demonstrations	244
	The Parikia	253
	The Unions	267
	The embassy	274
	The house as a diasporic ‘site of resistance’	281
	Conclusions	293
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>296</b>
	Appendices	303
	Bibliography	343

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Cheryl McEwan, for her support, encouragement and understanding. Without her impeccable guidance, this thesis would not have been possible. In addition, I am grateful to Dr Phil Jones and Clare Gonzalez for proofreading final versions of the thesis and for their helpful and insightful comments. Guy Bradbury provided much needed technical assistance with the scanning of documents and photos. Finally, I am indebted to my immediate (and long-suffering) family - my mother Moira, brother Ben and sister Jessica and in particular, my partner, Tim Evans, for their continuous love and belief in me. I would like to dedicate this thesis in loving memory of my father, Mihali who passed away before the start of this research, but who would have been proud.



## **List of Figures**

1. Map of 'occupied' Palestine
2. Map of Palestinian districts in historical Palestine (1946)
3. Map of Palestinian areas and Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza (2000)
4. The dispersal of Palestinians in the Middle East and worldwide
5. Applications and recognition of Palestinian asylum seekers (1990-2003)
6. Rafiq's drawing depicting his family's displacement in 1967
7. The symbolic use of maps of historical Palestine
8. Front cover of the book titled 'Israeli Colonialism and the Intifada'
9. Images of the Intifada
10. Images of Palestinian dancing
11. A Greek/Palestinian demonstration organised in remembrance of the murder of Ahmed Yasin (22<sup>nd</sup> March 2003)
12. A Stop the War demonstration (20<sup>th</sup> March 2003)
13. Photos of the Parikia
14. Stamp of the Parikia

## **List of Appendices**

1. List of respondents
2. Jamal's testimony on his mobility restrictions
3. Lina's testimony on her feelings of injustice and suffering
4. Discussion with Maha and Ahmed on 'unity', political representation and participation
5. Haleef's views on a future Palestinian state
6. Sa'id's discussion on the acquisition of citizenship
7. Mahmud's personal strategies of resistance
8. Ibrahim's views on advocacy
9. Haleef's memories of the role the GUPS played in abolishing tuition fees for Palestinian students
10. Abir's description of the political advocacy she is involved in

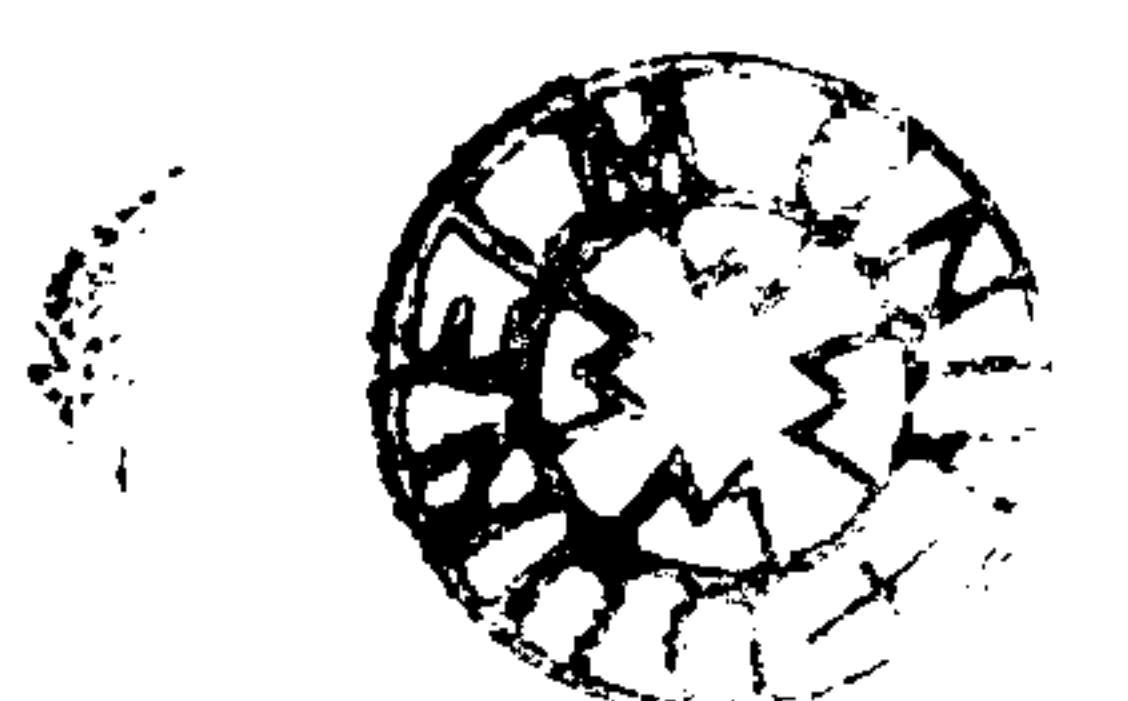
## Introduction

In this introductory chapter, the main aims of the research are described. This is followed by the provision of contextual information, which begins with a brief historical overview of migration to Greece and an account of research on this, followed by a summary of citizenship and immigration policies in Greece. Research on Palestinians in Europe as well as the role and significance of the PLO is analysed, after which background information on Palestinians in Greece is focused on. The chapter ends with an outline of the thesis.

The Palestinian diaspora was created in 1948, with the advent of the state of Israel, a date Palestinians remember as the ‘Nakba’. As a diverse group of people, Palestinians in diaspora often appear to be in a complex position, psychologically, politically and legally. Such a position is exemplified by Barghouti (2004: 10-11), as he crosses the bridge from Jordan into the West Bank for the first time in thirty years:

*Here on these prohibited wooden planks, I walk and chatter my whole life to myself...Moving images appear and disappear without coherence, scenes from an untidy life, a memory that bangs backward and forward like a shuttle. Images shape themselves and resist the editing that would give them final form. Their form is their chaos.*

*A distant childhood. The faces of friends and enemies. I am the person coming from the continents of others, from their languages and their borders. The person with spectacles on his eyes and a small bag on his shoulder. And these are the planks of the bridge. These are my steps on them. Here I am walking towards the land of the poem. A visitor? A refugee? A citizen? A ghost? I do not know.*





*Is this a political moment? Or an emotional one? Or social?  
A practical moment? A surreal one? A moment of the body? Or of the  
mind? The wood creaks. What has passed of life is shrouded in a mist  
that both hides and reveals. Why do I wish I could get rid of this bag?*

This poignant piece of writing succinctly captures many of the ideas this thesis is exploring. The confusion and ambivalence between different times and spaces Barghouti experiences because of his displacement and exile are themes that are present throughout. This extract also highlights the disjointed merging of the cultural, social and political within diasporic Palestinian feelings, experiences and actions and that, as a result, being and feeling Palestinian is difficult. Barghouti appears to be experiencing his ‘Palestinian-ness’<sup>1</sup> as something intensely longed for and tangible but also intangible, chaotic, distant, imagined and problematic as he tries to make sense of this particular moment. The lack of clarity about citizenship appears to play a role in this; he does not know what ‘category’ he comes into. This ambiguity with regard to citizenship is another key theme. It illustrates the relevance of studying a group such as the Palestinian diaspora, which appears to be striving to create ‘shared consciousness’, or collective ‘Palestinian-ness’ through constructions of unity and cross-border ties to Palestine and the rest of the Middle East. In Greece, their existence both within and outside state borders and official ‘categories’ may be both enabling and hindering for them, as they dynamically position, represent and negotiate their identities, as well as similarities and differences, temporally and spatially as individuals and in groups. They may slip inside boundaries, re-creating and solidifying networks and relations with each other and the homeland, they are in-between ‘here’ and ‘there’ and they also get ‘stuck’ outside, or excluded as non-citizens or foreigners and as a result of disunities and tensions in the diaspora

---

<sup>1</sup> This thesis is using the notion of ‘Palestinian-ness’ in inverted commas in order to problematise Palestinian ‘identity’ and to help depict the complexities, ambivalences and hybridity of feeling and being a diasporic Palestinian in Athens. These issues are discussed and analysed further in Chapter Two. It should be noted here that although the title of this thesis uses inverted commas around the word identities, because of discussions in the viva, this will not occur throughout the thesis as it is acknowledged that it is not necessary to do so. However, this thesis stresses that it is only possible to explore Palestinian multiple and dynamic identities and will hopefully illustrate that the notion of a singular Palestinian ‘identity’ or ‘national identity’ is problematic despite participant attempts to create one for political and cultural reasons, hence the use of inverted commas around ‘identity’ and ‘national identity’.



itself. This thesis focuses on notions of 'Palestinian-ness' as fluid and diasporas as evolving processes in-the-making. This helps highlight the importance of movement, suggesting that 'Palestinian-ness' is flexible and continuously evolving yet, at the same time, grounded within particular times/spaces. Such terms problematise the singularity and authority of the word 'identity' and the assumptions of authenticity and distinctiveness that often accompany it. In addition, they also aim to interrogate understandings of diasporas as homogenised cultural, social and political entities with neatly defined and distinct 'national' and/or 'ethnic' identities.

A case study of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens may be able to shed light on the difficult relationships between home, belonging, the homeland, citizenship, 'identity' and nationalism, as well as politicisation and potential political activism. These are all issues that are extremely important to Palestinians in diaspora and how they deal with such complexities may provide a useful tool to help understand how the geographies of such interrelated issues are changing. In particular, this thesis is influenced by calls to "develop (or rediscover?) analytical tools and concepts not coloured by the self-evidence of a world ordered into nation-states" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 325).

In order to try and understand these issues further, this thesis seeks to explore some of the interconnected facets and constructions of 'Palestinian-ness' in Athens, such as politicisation, home, hybridity, belonging, 'in-between-ness' and strategic 'shared consciousness'. This thesis aims to understand the ways in which Palestinians feel politicised and are potentially politically active as part of their everyday lives as well as how this is related to other cultural and social aspects of 'Palestinian-ness'. The advocacy and lobbying of what they call the Palestinian cause appears to be one of the major ways in which Palestinians are being politicised. This research suggests that for the majority of Palestinians in Athens, the Palestinian cause appears to entail an end to Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza<sup>2</sup> (which they see as illegal), self-determination leading to the creation of a Palestinian state, the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees and a solution to the issue of Jerusalem. This research explores how, in the process, they may be involved in postcolonial, hybrid and diasporic spaces,

---

<sup>2</sup> This research was conducted before the Israeli withdrawal of settlements from Gaza.



where they are strategically negotiating what it means to be politicised, to advocate and be resistant but in which they may also feel despairing and experience political apathy. Politicisation within the context of this thesis can be seen as a general term that describes the ways in which Palestinians act, feel and think politically on an everyday basis that cannot be separated from cultural and social facets of their diasporic lives and identities.

This research aims to discover the significance of formal citizenship status in Palestinian lives and actions in Athens and how they may be both symbolically and materially affected by it as well as how they may utilise it. As a result, citizenship as a set of theories and spatial practices is interrogated in order to analyse how it is perceived and experienced by those with and without formal citizenship. Perceptions of the relationships between citizenship and ‘national identity’ are explored in the process. Notions of citizenship and diasporic ‘Palestinian-ness’ are seen as needing to move beyond the arbitrary boundaries of nation-states, yet at the same time, the continued hindrances borders pose and the appeal of territorialisation, ‘shared consciousness’ and attachment to a territorial homeland have to be acknowledged.

Above all, this thesis stresses the salience of in-depth, grounded research that takes into account the situated positive and negative aspects of people’s lives, experiences, feelings and actions. The strength of this research lies in its potential ability to assess and understand the daily tensions, power inequalities and intricacies of the lives and identities of people ‘on the move’ within a dynamic time-space framework that recognises the bounded and unbounded nature of diasporic existence. The thesis also uses the case study of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens in order to illustrate the material relevance of the abstract notion of hybridity to everyday life. It is hoped that the realities of the complex relationships between constructions of home, homeland, belonging, political action and processes of resistance will challenge the concepts of spatial (and potentially homogenising notion of) ‘identity politics’. A much more nuanced appreciation of the ways in which migrants and those in diaspora are constructing ‘shared consciousness’, unities and disunities, in which transnational or cross-border connections and hybridity are crucial components, may then be possible.



## **Contextual information**

Although this thesis focuses on the Palestinian diaspora, it is important to place Greece contextually within Europe and particularly Southern Europe, so that the relatively recent changes in terms of migration to such countries (within which the Palestinian diaspora can be loosely placed) can be understood. King (2000) has developed a model of migration in Southern Europe, which is based on labour migration. He views migrants primarily as economic workers who are responding to specific (and often contradictory) social and economic aspects of Southern Europe, such as the need for foreign labour and, at the same time, the increasing barriers to immigration. This combination and constant battle of 'fortress' restrictions and 'eldorado' opportunities appears to be an ongoing process and forms an important framework for understanding migration in Southern Europe and in Greece. The strategic position of Greece within the EU and between Europe and the Middle East as well as the geographical proximity of Greece (materially and psychologically) to the Middle East is important to bear in mind, as they may influence the nature and extent of diasporic cross-border connections. In addition, the issues surrounding the Palestinian diaspora in Athens may be placed within wider perceptions of Arabs in Europe and around the world on Palestine and the Middle East.

## Research on migrants in Greece

Although not a great deal of research has been carried out on migrants, let alone diasporic groups, in Greece, there is an emerging interest in migration, as it is being recognised that this is a relatively under-researched area (Mestheneos 2002; Amitsis and Lazaridis 2001; Marvakis *et al.* 2001 and Triandafyllidou and Petronoti 2001). Most migration research carried out in Greece appears to concentrate on economic aspects of migration (for example, see Fakiolas 2000 and Iosifidis 1997). Reports on Greek immigration law and policy-making (Skordas 2003; Psimmenos and Georgoulas 1999), for example, seem to favour the division of migrants into strict categories for analytical and practical purposes. There has also been some research on the state of refugees and their lives (see Black 1992; Petronoti 1998, 2001; Mestheneos 2002 and Lazaridis and Theotoky 1999). Despite the ethnographic nature of some of this research, most



is quantitatively based and according to Lazaridis (2000: 51), there have been very few attempts to carry out detailed qualitative research on either female migrants or on how migrants themselves “perceive and interpret their experiences”. However, work such as that of King *et al.* (1998) on Albanian migrants, Lazaridis and Psimmenos (2000) and the work by Lazaridis herself (2000) on foreign domestic workers in Greece are amongst the notable exceptions.

### Historical overview of migration in Greece

It is only relatively recently that Greece has been acknowledged as a country of immigration as opposed to emigration. The existence of the Greek diaspora has been well documented (see, for example, Roudometof and Karpathakis 2002). Greece, however, has always been a country that has operated as a “connecting agency” (Psimmenos and Georgoulas 1999: 42) between Europe, Asia and Africa. This is partly due to its long tradition of shipping, commerce and tourism and the global links these have resulted in. Greece’s strategic geographical position in the Eastern Mediterranean must not be forgotten, as it has led to a multitude of dense economic and social networks centred in and around Greece. It was only after the 1970s that Greece started to become a country of immigration, experiencing what Cavounidis (2002) has called a sudden transformation in terms of migration. This immigration consisted not only of Greek return migrants from the US, Europe and Australia, but also of economic migrants from Eastern Europe, South-east Asia and Maghreb countries (Fakiolas 2000, Nikolinakos 1973). According to Petrakou (1999), for example, some 20, 000 foreign workers arrived from Morocco, Egypt, Philippines, Pakistan and Ethiopia between 1974-1975. This period of immigration was linked to the need to provide a cheap supply of labour and in the process, labour agreements as a result of guest worker policies, were made between Greece and several surrounding countries. These were instrumental in allowing the implementation of Greece’s economic and political goals at the time.

To this day, the main objective of Greek immigration-related government policy and decision-making has been economically based. In other words, it is concerned primarily with labour migration and the resulting benefits to the Greek



economy. This issue has been of particular importance to academics and migrant activists who claim that in the process, Greece is neglecting the human rights and legal protection of migrants, particularly in the wake of complicated and bureaucratic legalisation processes which, according to Jarvis (2004) are difficult for migrants to make sense of. She has called for increased migrant involvement and representation in political decision-making that affects them and also highlights the disillusionment many migrants in Greece feel as a result of their position.

From the 1980s, an upsurge in the number of migrants from East and Central Europe has occurred (Cavounidis 2002). Since the 1990s, however, they have been outnumbered by Albanian migrants, who, according to The National Centre for Social Research (EKKE), comprised nearly two thirds of the total immigrant population, which in 1999, was estimated to be around 800,000. Many Greek immigration figures appear to hide undocumented migrants, who do not enter the country through legal channels. Also obscured in such demographic approaches to migration is the plight and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers, who are increasingly being viewed as illegal immigrants. Although Greece signed the 1951 Geneva Convention, it was traditionally seen as a country of transit for refugees, on their way to more affluent Western European countries. This was a position that was encouraged by the Greek government. With the ever-increasing pressure of the perceived need to tighten and control immigration into so-called 'Fortress Europe', Greece is seen as having an important role to play because of its geographical location. During its six-month European Presidency in 2003, an important priority (third in the list of five priorities) was the control of migration, particularly illegal immigration. Thus, Greece has taken on the difficult task of stepping up the policing and controlling of its borders, which have often been seen as vulnerable and conducive to illegal immigration. There have also been attempts to stem the flow of potential asylum seekers from outer lying European countries into Western Europe through proposals which make EU countries asylum seekers first enter (such as Greece) responsible for the asylum process. However, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) stresses that there has to be a balance between regulation and protection of refugees (cited in Tziliavakis 2002).



Amnesty International and other human rights organisations have criticised the Greek government for its harsh attitude towards undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, claiming that the result has been the turning away of hundreds of people fleeing from persecution and according to Tzilivakis (2005a), the vast majority of asylum seeker applications are turned down. Greece has had to enter a phase where it acknowledges and makes positive steps to deal with both migrants' lives and Greek attitudes towards them. This is becoming increasingly important as, by 2015, the UN estimates that there will be 3.5 million immigrants in a total population of 14.2 million (cited in Galati 2002).

### Citizenship and immigration policies in Greece

As Western European countries tighten their borders it appears that Greece, like other Southern European countries, will be forced to become more than just a temporary place of residence. King (2000: 14) stresses that: "Southern Europe has been transformed from a 'waiting room' pending a further northward move...into a 'terminus' or desirable destination in its own right". Thus, the legal and citizenship aspects of migrants' lives become important. Only when immigrants are given a chance to become citizens and asylum seekers are able to become political refugees can they start to feel included in their host society and begin to claim rights. In addition to this, potential political participation or advocacy is more likely to occur when migrants are given some sort of legal status or host country citizenship. Unfortunately, a large proportion of immigrants currently residing in Greece are undocumented, which makes them illegal, vulnerable and with little access to social insurance and economic security.

In terms of immigration policies, Greece has always tended to promote assimilation in order to protect its 'national identity', which has resulted in a Greek society with greatly supported and reinforced shared religion, language and culture (Rozakis 1996). This, however, also makes it more difficult for immigrants to feel as though they belong, because they tend to be seen as 'Other', as visibly different (Triandafyllidou 1998; 2000) and, therefore, excluded from Greek society. As the Greek government has only fairly recently acknowledged the fact that Greece is indeed a country of permanent



immigration, immigration laws and policies have been slow to materialise and those that have are being implemented with difficulty. In addition to this, the Greek government does not easily grant citizenship to foreigners even if they are legal and have been resident in Greece for a substantial period of time (Fakiolas 1999). Instead, ethnic Greeks, such as Pontian Greeks, or Greeks who lived in Asia Minor prior to 1921, have always been favoured. The first immigration law, passed in 1921, relates to this specifically as it was aimed at assimilating Greek refugees from Asia Minor and at this time anyone who was not deemed Greek by origin was classified as 'alien'. Although this is not officially the case now, such an attitude appears to still be present. To reiterate, it is very difficult for someone who is not Greek or at least ethnically Greek to become a Greek citizen. Foreigners appear to be tolerated as long as they are of some use to Greece and its economy. At the same time, though, in order to live their lives in Greece more easily, migrants do have to 'integrate' to a certain extent. This is not necessarily easy, however, and the lack of opportunities and incentives for migrants to feel as though they fully 'belong' to Greek society may have implications in terms of cross-border networks and political participation.

Although one cannot generalise about the diverse group of people that make up the migrant population in Greece, it is becoming clear, as mentioned above, people are increasingly migrating to Greece on a long-term basis. While Greek migration policy has begun to deal with this, Greek society as a whole, will arguably take much longer. However, there are signs that Greece is becoming more tolerant of its 'multicultural' status (Tzilivakis 2003a), despite the recent tendency in some Western countries to abandon state-sponsored multiculturalism and advocate assimilation (Mitchell 2004). This move towards multiculturalism in Greece seems to be the result of constant negotiations between migrant community groups and the state, and it appears that it has mainly been up to committed community groups to make the first moves to combat xenophobia, but also to reach out and provide material and emotional support to migrants. There is substantial evidence to suggest that popular perceptions of many migrant groups have been extremely negative (EKA 1997; Close 2002: 197). Albanians, in particular, have been subject to stereotypical and negative representations in the media, are often perceived as criminals



(Simipoulos 2004) and are discriminated against, creating marked social exclusion (Lazaridis and Psimmenos 2000). Even government officials working with migrants have been known to differentiate amongst different immigrant groups based on their perceptions of such groups as Psimmenos (2001) has shown. However, there are increasing government initiatives to promote better relations between Greeks and migrants. One example is the government's new think-tank, called the Migration Policy Institute (Tzilivakis 2003a). In addition, 260 million euros is being made available from 2003-2006 to 'train' Greeks and the civil services to co-exist with immigrants, as well as to help migrants integrate (Galati 2002) although Tzilivakis (2005a) reports that this initiative has not materialised due to a lack of government money. The effects of such moves remain to be seen and there are those who remain sceptical about such efforts, particularly when recent changes to immigration policy have proven very hard to implement. It appears that the EU has had a significant influence on such efforts, particularly during the period of Greek EU presidency, which may mean that such efforts are more cosmetic than sincere. Law 1975/1991 was aimed at harmonising Greece's immigration policies with those of Europe. According to Psimmenos and Georgoulas (1999: 58), however, its principal aim was to eliminate illegal migration and it stated that Greece was not a country of immigration, thus making it even more difficult for long term legal immigrants to obtain Greek citizenship and to participate in political life (Fakiolas 1999: 207).

Psimmenos (2001) argues that implementation of policies are made difficult because of the specific bureaucratic, centralised and authoritarian style of administrative management, which appears to be unduly influenced by party politics, ideology and personal favours. In such an atmosphere of often racist, systematic and engrained political clientelism, it is perhaps unsurprising that certain groups and individual people get favoured, whilst others are discriminated against. What becomes apparent in Psimmenos's work (*ibid.*) is the tendency of immigration officials to classify according to pre-conceived stereotypes. This is particularly worrying as it is such officials who are responsible for the granting of much-needed work permits and who make vital decisions concerning migrant lives and citizenship statuses. In addition to this,



implementation is made all the harder as a result of a lack of communication between policy-makers and the officials and police who are actually doing the implementing on the ground. Implementation appears to be the result of a precarious balance between official government discourses on modernisation and restructuring of welfare services and the administrative organisational culture and practices of officials and organisations who have to translate such policies into reality. In what is a time of economic and political transformations for the Greek government, officials appear to be carrying out implementation as a result of constant negotiations between furthering their careers, institutional interests and restraints and the aims of a labour market. In short, they are left to judge the use of particular groups of economic migrants to the Greek economy, whilst at the same time, these decisions are made on the basis of perceptions of migrants as a 'threat' that has to be controlled. The end result is that implementation is subject to a problematic organisational culture that is replete with complex networks that are arranged on the basis of cultural and structural negotiations between official, institutions and immigrants themselves (Kassimati and Psimmenos 2002). This appears to have been a major reason why the legal drive in 1998 to regularise migration by providing temporary residence and work permits to 350,000 undocumented migrants was a failure (Fakiolas 1999).

A second attempt at regularisation was occurring whilst the research was in process, although it too has been plagued with problems of implementation and what appears to be insurmountable bureaucracy, even though it was designed to correct the mistakes of the previous attempt. It forms part of Law 2910/2001, which is concerned with all matters relating to the regulation of the legal status of foreigners in Greece, including entry, work, residence, expulsion as well as the granting of citizenship, although it does not apply to refugees and asylum seekers. It appears that the inherent failure of immigration policies, particularly in terms of dealing with illegal immigration, is the result of the incongruous treatment of migrants by such laws. On the one hand, migrants are viewed purely in terms of how they can benefit the Greek economy, which has led to their exploitation and, on the other hand, the basic and human rights that all immigrants should have must also be taken into account. Regularisation is desirable, but only if immigrant laws can ensure the adequate treatment of



migrants and provision of rights in the actual process of regularisation and once they do become legal.<sup>3</sup> Tziliivakis (2003b; 2005a) also reiterates the numerous problems that have been associated with the current wave of regularisation, whereby not only is the actual process full of bureaucracy, but it is also increasingly difficult for migrants to meet the criteria needed for legalisation. In addition, once they attain legal status, they are not so attractive because as employees their employers have to pay their social insurance (known as IKA in Greece). This has meant that they are less able to find jobs once they have legal status and this has been an incentive for many migrants to remain illegal and part of the vibrant informal economy of Greece. It is worth noting that Psimmenos and Georgoulas (1999) also feel that present migration policies are lacking in basic measures that ensure human rights because most immigrants do not have any social security or benefits. Whilst illegal migrants are in a vulnerable position, those who are legal do not necessarily appear much better off, as they are still prone to exploitation by prospective employers who control the terms of their employment (Kourtovik 1999, cited in Psimmenos and Georgoulas 1999).

The illegality of so many migrants and the difficulties they experience also appears to have prompted the vigorous use of informal networks outside the formal political sphere in Greece, but also transnationally, in order to provide economic, social and political support (Fakiolas 1999). Other research has also pointed to the use Eritrean refugees make of such networks, allowing them to improvise and be flexible as a strategy for improving their lives and overcoming institutional barriers (Petronoti 2001). Refugees and asylum seekers appear to have fared a little better than labour migrants in terms of the protection, provision and support available to them from such organisations as the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), but they too are at the mercy of bureaucratic and arduous asylum procedures and the government's attempts to minimise illegal immigration.<sup>4</sup> The limited participation of the vast majority of foreigners (both refugees and labour migrants alike) in Greek political life is an issue that needs addressing. However, it is also this that potentially motivates migrant groups to

---

<sup>3</sup> For a full review of this law, as well as its shortcomings, see Skordas (2002).

<sup>4</sup> For more in-depth discussions of recent legislation on refugees see Toxopeus (1997) and a report by the European Union's Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs (2001).



organise and be politically active through informal spaces at the local community and collective levels, as well as the transnational in order to exert pressure on the Greek government. This would also explain the tendency for groups such as Palestinians to work together and cooperate via complex networks with other migrant groups, as well as NGOs, as a strategy to maximise their influence (and advocacy of causes or issues) and security and minimise their vulnerability and exclusion.

In order that the long process of settling the intricacies of migrant social, economic and political integration and participation in an increasingly plural and diverse Greek society can begin at policy level, it would seem that current efforts to legalise migrants have to be continued and enhanced, however difficult this might be. It does appear that the Greek government's uncommitted and unconvincing attempts to provide migrants with secure and basic legal rights is strongly linked to its fear that, in the words of Fakiolas (1999: 213), they would change from being "political objects to political actors". This would ultimately pose a major challenge to Greece's zealous attempts to preserve its much-guarded perceptions of national identity and cultural unity. At the same time, the symbolic and material cross-border connections migrants, refugees and those in diaspora create and nourish may encourage them to continue feeling attached to and identify with their homeland or host country. This should not prevent them from being able to gain Greek citizenship and they, in the process, should not have to conform to stereotypical and homogenous notions of Greek national identity.

#### Research on Palestinians in Europe

Palestinians in diaspora call the area depicted in Figure 1 their historical homeland that now encompasses Israel and which, as the map itself states, they see as occupied. Figure 2 illustrates the areas within historical Palestine to which many diasporic Palestinians can trace the villages of their families and are crucial to feelings of displacement, home and belonging. Figure 3 is a more recent map of Palestinian areas in all their complexity. All the maps are of symbolic importance in constructions of diasporic and exilic 'Palestinian-ness', suffering and politicisation.



**Figure 1 - Map of 'occupied' historical Palestine**



(Source: [www.palestine-net.com/geography/gifs/palmap.gif](http://www.palestine-net.com/geography/gifs/palmap.gif))

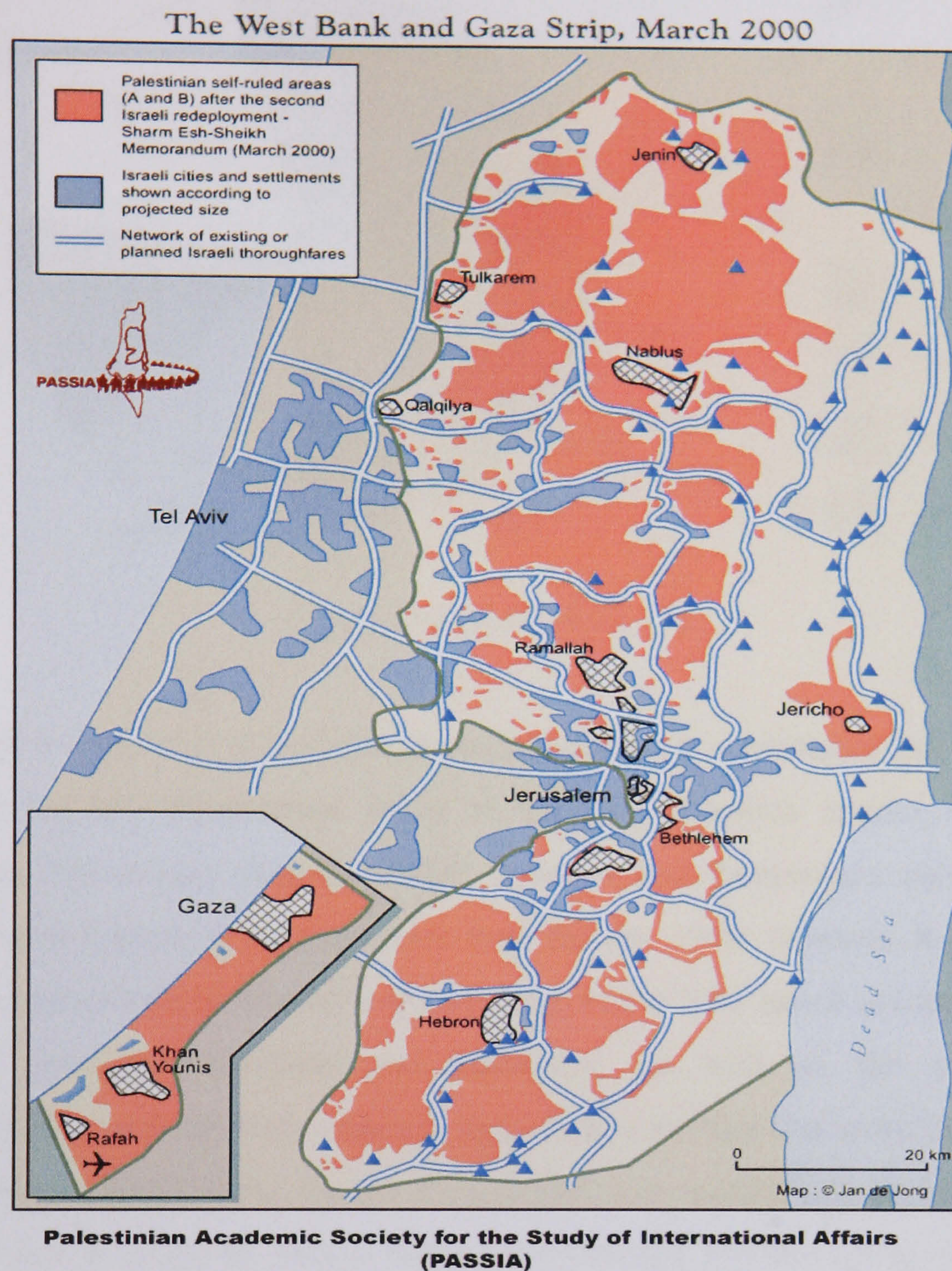
**Figure 2 - Map of Palestinian districts in historical Palestine (1946)**



(Source: [www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Maps/Story583.html](http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Maps/Story583.html))



**Figure 3 - Map of Palestinian areas and Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza (2000)**

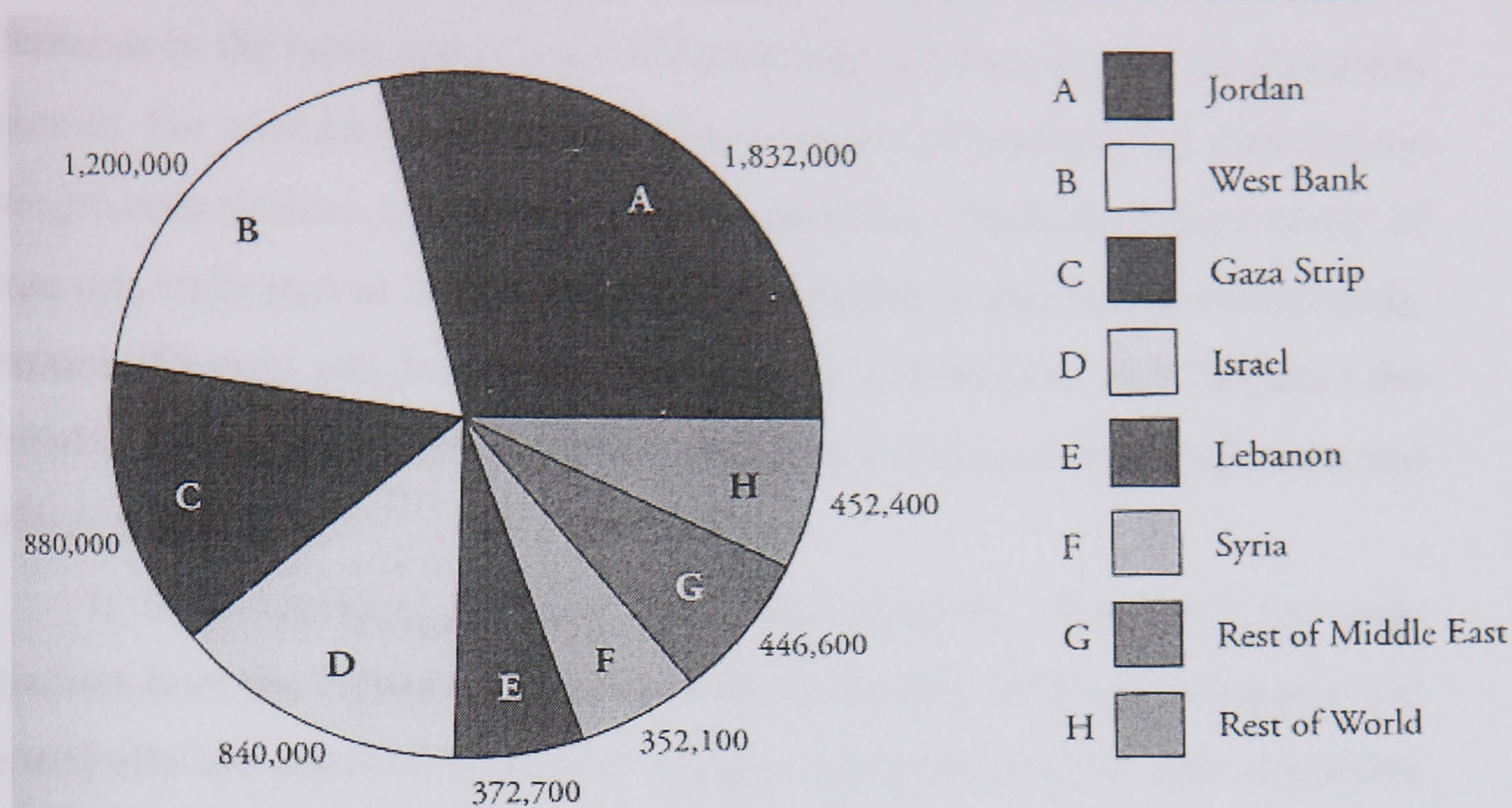


(Source: [www.passia.org/palestine\\_facts/MAPS/wbgs1.htm](http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/MAPS/wbgs1.htm))

There does not appear to have been much research on Palestinians in Europe. Of the research that has been carried out, a great deal appears to focus on Palestinians as refugees (see, for example, Karmi and Cotran 1999), issues of assimilation and integration in the host country and cultural 'identity' (see, for example, Karmi 1999). Most diasporic Palestinians live in and around the Middle East and are incredibly diverse, socially, economically and politically (Weighill 1999, Said 1986). Figure 4 depicts the dispersal of Palestinians around the Middle East and the rest of the world.



**Figure 4 - The dispersal of Palestinians in the Middle East and worldwide**



(source: Weighill 1999: 15)

Although it is difficult to ascertain the exact number, it is estimated that there are roughly 150,000 Palestinians living in Europe, of which around 80% are Lebanese Palestinians (Shiblak 2000). It seems that Palestinians only started migrating to Europe in large numbers from the late 1960s onwards. It was only as a consequence (both directly and indirectly) of the 1967 Israeli occupation, the ensuing political turbulence and resistance, as well as the escalating discrimination towards Palestinians in some Arab countries that more large-scale migration to Europe began. Indeed, Palestinians were increasingly perceived as a security risk in countries such as Jordan and Lebanon and this led to increasing political persecution, which acted as an incentive for Palestinians to move beyond the Middle East. Although the majority of the first migrations during the 1970s were individual decisions, after the civil war in Lebanon in the 1980s, whole communities of refugees fled to Europe, primarily to Germany, Scandinavia and Western and Eastern Europe. It is thought that the largest group of Palestinians in Europe are in Germany where it is claimed that they number about 80,000 (Shiblak 2000). There have also been more recent movements of Palestinians to Europe as a result of the ongoing tensions in Palestine and Israel and the second Intifada. In Britain alone, two to three thousand Palestinians arrived in last couple of years (*ibid.*). It is interesting to note Hanafi's (2005) observation that Palestinians have 'infiltrated' Europe; by this he appears to



mean that their movement has gone largely unnoticed. He also stresses the differences in the types and origins of Palestinians moving to specific European countries. For example, he notes the high numbers of professional Palestinians amongst communities in the UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy many of whom originally moved as students and later decided to stay. In the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, there are many Palestinians who fled after the civil war in Lebanon in the 1980s, but this group contained few academics and professionals (*ibid.*).

It is unsurprising, perhaps, given this diversity, that there are wide variations between Palestinian communities in Europe, although it appears that the majority are stateless holders of refugee travel documents with vulnerable and insecure citizenship status. This is because despite the fact that over three million of the Palestinian diaspora are registered as refugees with United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Palestinians are excluded from the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees. This has meant that once:

*UNWRA registered refugees ... leave its field of operation in the Middle East they are often not treated by the international community as 'genuine' refugees and therefore cannot claim asylum outside the Middle East.*

(Weighill 1999: 11)

The issues of citizenship, home and belonging are particularly acute for Palestinians, as many, particularly in the Middle East, feel they have been the victims of continuous discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation for over 50 years. Within Europe, there appears to be a distinction, however, between the first, older groups of Palestinians and the later ones who have arrived in the last two decades. The former appear to have integrated more than the latter and, according to Shiblak (2000), there is minimal contact between the two. However, all Palestinians in Europe have had to experience and still are experiencing exile and statelessness.

Perhaps what is more important is the variation in the feelings and constructions of nationalism and politicisation felt by Palestinians in different



European countries as well as how this is related to their host country and their position and integration within it. For many, disillusionment and apathy has apparently resulted in the loss of a coherent and collective cultural 'identity' or shared feelings of being Palestinian, making them feel confused about where they perceive they belong and where their home is (Shiblak 2000). The homeland, always a part of their identities and memory is for some, a very distant and uneasy notion to come to terms with. In Sweden, for instance, Ghani (2000) describes how Palestinians live on the periphery of Swedish society in a state of alienation, finding little comfort in knowing that they are Palestinian and that they have a homeland. Indeed, according to Ghani (*ibid.*), in Sweden the homeland is perceived as symbolic of the suffering they have had to endure rather than a stimulus for 'solidarity' or a collective and united 'identity'. One reason given for their apparent 'in-between-ness' is that the majority are the offspring of poor Palestinian refugees who left Palestine in 1948 and have never known their homeland. Another reason for this marginality is the very different culture and society in Sweden and indeed in all of Western Europe that they have had to adapt to. Hanafi (2005) also discusses the feelings of despair of Palestinians with low incomes living on social welfare in Scandinavian countries. Hanafi (*ibid.*) points to the large scale 'assimilation' of Palestinians in France, which is felt may be the consequence of the 'French absorption model' of immigrants that is seen as unique within Europe, as well as weak community networks.

It is interesting to note the difference between better off Palestinian elites and the 'average' Palestinian in terms of feelings of 'identity' in the diaspora as a whole. It seems that elites who are in a more privileged position are able to engage in cross-border activities, such as sending money and travelling to the homeland. This appears to be related to the fact that they enjoy more secure citizenship status and are able to move around the world more freely as a result, living life to a high standard. They may have dual nationality, which greatly enhances their ability to create and maintain cross-border political, social and economic networks. These have had a positive influence in terms of initiating further global movements of Palestinians and commercial activities. According to Hanafi (2005), however, connections between European Palestinians and the



'homeland' are loose compared to North American Palestinians. Virtual networks, such as PALESTA<sup>5</sup> are being created in order to connect Palestinians but many are aimed at professionals with access to the internet. The differences between elite and lower income Palestinians highlight the diversity of Palestinian existence in Europe as well as the potential for tensions within and between different communities.

According to Dorai (2002), non-elite Palestinians in exile maintain their sense of cultural and 'national identity' more strongly. This is a result of the tradition of oral history and 'collective memory' in which images, for instance, of a family's village are passed down from generation to generation (Said 1986). For them, an idealised homeland is still clung to, whereas elites may be more aware of and influenced by the transformation that Palestine is continuously undergoing and appear to have a less idealistic perception of their homeland as a result. What is significant, however, as Dorai (2002) stresses, is that this does not appear to have severed or undermined perceptions of 'unity' or 'solidarity' of Palestinians in diaspora. The conflicting opinions of authors in terms of whether Palestinians do feel 'united' and possess strong feelings of 'national identity', appears to indicate that more research is needed on the Palestinian diaspora both within Europe and North America and on these complex issues in particular.

#### The role and importance of the PLO to Palestinians in diaspora

The role and importance of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the identities and political activism of the Palestinian diaspora must be noted. Bowman (2003: 335) stresses the role in which organisations such as the PLO play in evoking "banner of the nation", which "enabled Palestinians in various sites and states to imagine their differences subsumed within the programme of liberating 'Palestine'". As Lindholm Schulz (2003: 46) also points out: "the PLO and its activities and networks throughout the world indicate the pervasiveness and salience of diaspora politics in international relations".

---

<sup>5</sup> PALESTA: Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Abroad, a virtual community established at the end of 1997, which has the "objective of harnessing the scientific and technological knowledge of Palestinian expatriate professionals for the benefit of development efforts in Palestine" (Hanafi 2005: 586).



According to the late Yasser Arafat<sup>6</sup>, the PLO “is not one of many Palestinian institutions. It is the all-embracing Palestinian institution that comprises all the institutions of the Palestinian people”. It has transformed the Palestinian people “from a refugee people waiting in queues for charity and alms into a people fighting for freedom” (quoted in Rubin 1993: 145).

The PLO was founded in 1964 and was initially concerned with Arab nationalism. This was because it was created by the Arab League as a separate entity for the Palestinian people, but “it was under Egyptian control and the armed forces connected with it formed part of the armies of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq” (Hourani 1991: 412). It was only after 1967 that the PLO’s ideologies started specifically promoting Palestinian nationalism and the liberation of Palestine, after it became influenced by al-Fateh, a sub-group founded in the late 1950s by Yasser Arafat and several other young refugee Palestinians from Gaza. Al-Fateh’s rhetoric of activism, armed struggle and resistance had a great deal of popular appeal and support, particularly as it engaged in military activities and, after 1969, it became the most influential group within the PLO (Cobban 1984). It was in Cairo, at the Fifth Session of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) that Al-Fateh (together with other Palestinian guerrilla organisations) joined the PLO and where Yasser Arafat was elected as the Chairman of the executive committee (Davis 1997). In 1974, the PLO was recognised as the sole “legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in any Palestinian territory that is liberated...the PLO [was also] recognised by the League of Arab States as the representative of the (non existent) state of Palestine” (*ibid.*: 84).

The PLO’s role in constructions of what it means to be Palestinian cannot be underestimated. For instance, the PLO used the Kuffiya, the traditional headscarf worn by peasant farmers and Bedouins and turned it into a symbol of Palestinian resistance. This was because it was also worn by the fedayeen, the guerrilla-soldiers who fought and sacrificed their lives for Palestine. It was they who became the symbol for armed struggle and resistance; to be Palestinian, therefore, came to mean resistance and struggle for liberation against all odds. Such constructions have remained important through time as can be seen by the

---

<sup>6</sup> This research was carried out before the death of Yasser Arafat.



existence of the two Intifadas and Palestinians who are willing to sacrifice their lives for their cause. Here, we can also see the importance of the notion of having a cause, which is seen as potentially uniting all Palestinians whatever their class or status, and the wearing of the peasant Kuffiya by PLO members signified this construction of a unified Palestine. The PLO appears to have managed to spread its pervasive notions of what it means to be Palestinian to Palestinians as well as non-Palestinians around the world. For instance, the Palestinian Representation in Greece, like those in many other European countries, started its life as a PLO office (and is still PLO affiliated) and is an important political actor. Incidentally, as Palestinian participants in this research call the Representation an embassy, so too will this thesis.

Of further symbolic importance is that resistance, self-representation and activism have formed the backbone of PLO ideology and the will to unite, persist and try to change the status quo appears to be lodged in the minds and hearts of the Palestinian diaspora. This is despite its turn towards a more pragmatic, institutional approach since the 1970s that focused less on revolution and more on self-determination and statehood. This has also meant that 'Right of Return' of Palestinian refugees, which was originally one of the core issues has increasingly become compromised. Hourani (1991) points to 1988 as the beginning of a new phase for the 'Palestinian problem'. The existence of the first Intifada appeared to illustrate the 'unity' of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO found itself in a position of power but

*its own nature was changed. It had to take into account the opinion of those in the Occupied Territories and their desire to end the Occupation. The Palestinian National Council, the representative body of Palestinians met in Algiers and produced a charter proclaiming its willingness to accept the existence of Israel and to negotiate a settlement with it.* (Hourani 1991: 433)

This focus on the creation of a state of Palestine on the 1967 borders (in other words, within the West Bank and Gaza) is an issue of much contention amongst diasporic Palestinians, many of whom feel that the peace process is ignoring the issue of return. The divisions between those Palestinians 'inside' or from the



West Bank and Gaza and those ‘outside’ in diaspora have been exacerbated by the fact that despite the Palestinian diaspora being instrumental in early constructions of Palestinian nationalism and representation, since 1999 and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), they have increasingly felt ‘left out’. The PNA was created to represent the interests of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza; the PLO, most of whom physically moved to the West Bank and Gaza, was to continue representing the Palestinian diaspora.<sup>7</sup> However, their roles soon blurred and creating a Palestinian state, using a step-by-step and self-rule approach became the primary objective. This was a long way from the original revolutionary ideals.

Popular and particularly diasporic opposition to and loss of faith in the PLO and PNA (especially with Arafat as a leader) increasingly started to occur during the peace process, which was initiated at the Madrid conference in 1991. This may have been linked to the increasing tendencies towards patronage politics, the pursuance of elite interests, corruption and the weakening of processes to ensure transparency in decision-making and governance within the PNA and its legislative council, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) (Lindholm Schulz 2003). Rubin (1993: 148) claims that the PLO is not democratic and that Palestinians have had limited control over the organisation and have not necessarily approved of its tactics. According to Johnson and Kuttub (2001), the Palestinian Authority (PA) has engaged in ‘authoritarian populism’, in which ‘the people’ are used to legitimise the government but are also, at the same time, not given the opportunity to participate politically, have a political voice and thus get involved in the decision-making that affects their lives. They also claim that the peace process has created “a profound political crisis of Palestinian nationalism”, which has resulted in the marginalisation of the social movements, NGOs and political activism that were very active during the first Intifada (*ibid.*: 25). This has also been the result of the movement from informal to formal politics and associated closed political structures on the road to statehood. The PLO also appears to have been subject to numerous internal conflicts and disunities, whilst claiming to be united (Rubin 1993).

---

<sup>7</sup> For more on the legal aspects of Palestinian citizenship and provisional statehood, see Davis (1997).



The peace process has also highlighted tensions between the PLO and opposing factions as well as within the PLO (Rubin 1993) although according to Johnson and Kuttub (2001), the hegemony of the PA is increasing at the expense of the fragility of Left-opposition parties. The potential for formally based political activism in the diaspora could, therefore, be seen as decreasing even more as they may be becoming even more marginalized and separated from decision-making that affects their present and future legal and socio-political relationships with Palestine. At the same time, this should not cloud the continued attempts at informal political activism that may take place in the diaspora in order to counterbalance what could be called a 'double exclusion' in many instances. As stateless individuals (especially if they are not citizens of the country in which they reside), Palestinians are often excluded from the formal political sphere both where they live and where they are from and feel they belong (Palestine). The results of this in terms of political activism and mobilisation appear to be very varied throughout Europe but Lindholm Schulz (2003) rightly points to the increase of spaces and events such as demonstrations in different European countries that allow Palestinians to voice their dissatisfactions and hopes. At the same time, the advent of what Hanafi (2005) calls 'cyberdemocracy' and virtual networks and communities may be stimulating activism in the struggle for diasporic Palestinian involvement in the decision-making processes leading to a Palestinian state, in which their human and civil rights may be represented.

The experiences and perceptions of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens must be placed within this very brief introduction to what appears to be chaotic, unstable and very complicated Palestinian politics. The politicised 'Palestinian-ness', potential activism, constructions of 'shared consciousness' and feelings of home and belonging of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens and beyond are greatly influenced by the socio-political climate in Palestine, their perceptions of it and their relationships and cross-border connections to it.

### Palestinians in Greece

Palestinians appear to have been relatively invisible in research on refugees and migrants in Europe and especially in Greece. The paucity and unreliability of



data on migrants in Greece is always a factor to bear in mind (Cavounidis 2002; Mestheneos 2002: 182). Strict typologies common in much migration research may have some use but they, as well as official statistics, also allow a great number of people to 'disappear' within categories (Psimmenos and Georgoulas 1999: 48) and are of limited value in terms of exploring the realities of the lives, identities and experiences of those in diaspora. Classifications are also misleading and not particularly helpful in this respect as they often depend on generalisations, rather than on in-depth explorations. This is particularly the case for Palestinians, as their country of origin, for example, may often be classed as Egypt or other Middle East countries, such as Jordan, and their legal citizenship as Egyptian or Jordanian accordingly. Palestinian immigrants seem to be classed as having come from and thus are subsumed into the arbitrary category of the 'Middle East' generally, which includes a huge variety of migrants. Alternatively, they are simply classed as 'other'. In short, it appears to be virtually impossible to officially trace their movements into and subsequently within Greece, particularly as they do not constitute a large minority. It is estimated that there are around 4000 Palestinians currently in Athens, according to the Palestinian embassy there, although interestingly and, perhaps, unsurprisingly there is no general consensus on this amongst Palestinians. The majority are Muslims, forming part of the 120,000 Muslim minority in Greece (Rozakis 1996). On the whole, Arabs in Greece appear to be 'hidden', an observation made by Nagel (2002) with respect to Arabs in Britain.

In contrast, perhaps, to diasporic groups in other Western countries, Palestinians in Greece do not appeal for rights based on the fact that they are 'Arab' or 'Muslim', but Palestinian. Several officially recognised Unions have been created, aimed at helping and protecting the rights of their members and to gain some understanding of the number and status of those involved. A key aspect of their existence appears to be to promote the Palestinian cause and to disseminate information about the historical and contemporary plight of the Palestinian people. The role of such formal Palestinian advocacy movements in both public and private spheres must not be underestimated. To date, there is a General Union of Palestinian students (GUPS), a General Union of Palestinian



Workers (GUPW)<sup>8</sup>, as well as a Palestinian Doctors' Union and there are also plans to create a Civil Engineers' Union. One should not forget the aims of the first Palestinian groups that were created in the Middle East primarily for purposes of creating resistance and solidarity and "uniting all the resistance movements of the Palestinian people regardless of their political differences" such as the Students' Federation and al-Fatah (Frangi 1983: 95). The political organisation of Palestinians has always been complex, but the fact that the embassy supports the PLO has implications for ordinary Palestinians in Greece. According to the embassy, any political activity that does get their seal of approval must not undermine or contradict its official position.

Palestinians appear to have had an easier time than other migrants in Greece in terms of the popular and governmental support they have received (Mavroudi 2002, Shawa, personal communication, 2004). Their favoured, if hidden presence makes their residence in Athens more interesting and unique, but at the same time, this should not obscure the socio-economic differences and power inequalities amongst Palestinians in Athens. The significance of their position and support outweighs their numerical insignificance, making them a very viable group of people to research. The diversity of the Palestinian diaspora in Greece needs to be pointed out. There are:

- refugees (both legal and illegal; their exact number is uncertain).
- legal labour migrants (who number roughly 100 according to the GUPW; this does not, however, include those who are not registered with the Union, as well as those who are in Greece illegally). A few in this group are Greek citizens and many have lived in Greece for over 10 years.
- students (of whom there are estimated to be around 120 in Greece and 80 in Athens, according to the GUPS in Greece). Most are in Athens legally, although many appear to work part-time for financial reasons, which is not strictly allowed under the student permit they have.

---

<sup>8</sup> There appear to be two opposing Workers' Unions; this will be discussed further in Chapter Five. For now, it suffices to say that there appears to be an 'old' and a 'new' one, which was being created at the time of research.



- transient foreign company employees (FCE), of which there are estimated to be around 400 according to anecdotal evidence from employees. The vast majority appear to be legal residents whose residency is linked to their jobs. Participants also refer to these foreign companies as ‘Law ‘89 Companies’.
- doctors (this group numbers about 2000, according to the Palestinian embassy in Greece), all of whom appear to be legal. It is individuals in this group who are most likely to possess Greek citizenship and who have been resident in Greece the longest.

This list is not exhaustive, but it provides an idea of the general composition of Palestinians living in Athens. The numbers are estimates and clearly the total does not add up to the 4000 given by the Palestinian embassy; it is, therefore, very difficult to know the exact numbers in each ‘group’. For the purposes of this research, however, this does not matter a great deal. There are those who are legal, have valid work permits or who have married Greek women or men (the former is more common) and have obtained Greek citizenship and there are others who are illegal (although according to official sources their numbers are negligible). Most Palestinians in Athens do not have Greek citizenship and could effectively be seen as stateless. Their often ambiguous and confusing citizenship status is linked to their statelessness and displacement round the Middle East and the ensuing granting of different legal statuses. As a result, it very difficult to classify them as an arbitrary and easily defined group. It is possible that the reason that so little is known about Palestinians in Greece is precisely because they are ‘hidden’ in the sense that they keep to themselves as much as they can, not creating problems and cooperating with the Greek authorities as much as possible.

Although it is clear that the vast majority of Palestinians residing in Greece could be considered to be refugees and, in fact, some of them and their families are UNRWA registered, it is very difficult to ascertain exact figures of citizenship and refugee statuses of Palestinians in Greece. Figures from the UNHCR in Greece are shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5 - Applications and recognition of Palestinian asylum seekers (1990-2003)**

Applications		Recognition (granting of asylum)
1990:	6	0
1991:	4	0
1992:	0	0
1993:	0	0
1994:	2	3
1995:	5	11
1996:	0	2
1997:	5	3
1998:	4	6
1999:	2	0
2000:	36	4
2001:	38	0
2002:	60	5
2003 (until Sept):	110	0

According to the embassy, there are very few officially registered refugees in Greece. This may be because asylum procedures in Greece are complex and deter most potential asylum seekers, such as Kurds from applying (Papadopoulou 2003). However, many Palestinians in Athens may recognise themselves as refugees in the general sense that they as a people have been displaced and are in exile.

It appears that most Palestinians in Greece are first generation migrants in the sense that they have been the ones to make the move to Greece, not their parents. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Palestine was their last place of residence. Many have been part of the Palestinian diaspora in the Middle East since 1948 or 1967, two dates that have prompted mass movements of Palestinians. This means, therefore, that many Palestinians living in Greece have never lived in Palestine, or indeed visited it. One could say, therefore, that Palestinians in Greece are relatively recent migrants to the country, as it appears that the first wave of immigration was during the early 1980s when a number of Palestinians came as students and business people as a result of the war in Lebanon. In fact, this was when a large Palestinian-owned engineering and construction company relocated to Athens from Beirut where it was originally based. This has resulted in the employment of several hundred Palestinians, most



of whom are men. Students have continued to come to Athens, because they receive scholarships from the Greek government.

It appears that the attitude and position in the 1970s and 1980s of the main left-wing Greek political party, PASOK, in power at the time, under the leadership of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, influenced the migration of Palestinians to Greece. Iordanidis (2000: 21) reports in the conservative Greek daily 'I Kathimerini' that:

*the Greek paradox is that ever since 1974, Arafat has had a steadfast ally and supporter in Greece, that is the late Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou and his PASOK socialists. The reformist Prime Minister Costas Simitis<sup>9</sup> also appeared with Arafat before the enthusiastic socialist congress last October. Now that the US questions Arafat's leadership, Simitis and his government remain silent and 'Brother' Arafat has been dumped.*

Incidentally, 1981, the year that PASOK came into power was also the year that scholarships were established to help Palestinian students in Greece. Although the numbers available to Palestinian students appears to be decreasing, the scholarships have continued to be given over the years regardless of the political climate in Greece. It is interesting to note that it was under a right-wing government that Palestinian students first received free tuition in 1976, thanks to the efforts of the newly created GUPS; it was members of this Union who talked to Ministers about the need for Palestinian tuition fees to be waived. Helena Smith (2002) of the Guardian newspaper also stresses the support and 'pro-Palestinian' sentiment that is evident in Greece. She points out how a wide range of Greeks, from celebrities to students "have joined forces to express outrage over the plight of the Palestinians and Israel's incursions in the West Bank". It is apparent, therefore, that there is a great deal of popular support for Palestinians and their issues. Palestinians may feel this support is linked to Greek historical

---

<sup>9</sup> Costas Simitis belonged to the same political party, PASOK, as Papandreou, which was in power in Greece at the time of the research. As of 7 March 2004, Nea Dimokratia, a right wing political party has been in power, under Kostas Karamanlis.



experiences of occupation. Others such as Smith (2002) claim, however, that this pro-Palestinian sentiment may also be the result of Greek anti-semitism (see also GHM 2002). Such anti-semitic attitudes are hard to understand but may be related to the negative position of the Greek Orthodox Church on the Jewish religion, which may have influenced Greek perceptions of Jews in Greece, but also in Israel. Greece, for example, was the last of the EU states to create diplomatic ties with the state of Israel in 1990.

It should be pointed out that a great deal of active political and social support is provided by a number of Greek socialist, communist, as well as human rights groups, organisations, and Workers' Unions. A Palestinian cultural festival, for example, (held 7-13 June 2002) was organised under the general auspices of a group promoting relations between Athens and Palestine with the co-operation and financial support of numerous Greek labour and cultural organisations, such as the General Coalition of Greek Workers (GSEE), the Centre for Research on Equality Issues and the Greek Film Centre. It illustrates the coming together of diverse groups with different interests around the Palestinian cause. There are also demonstrations and charity events, which although occur at regular intervals, also appear to be linked to specific events in the Middle East, such as the war in Iraq and the two Intifadas in Palestine. Groups such as the Socialist Workers, their publications and newspapers, local representatives of pan-European forums and groups such as the European Social Forum that were born out of the anti-capitalist protests and issues of Seattle and Genoa are leading the support for Palestinians in Greece. The Palestinian cause is also often perceived as uniting the Left (Sifakakis 2002). There are Greek advocacy networks in place that work together in varying degrees with the Palestinian diaspora, but also on their own, to promote and encourage support for Palestinians in the mass media and to influence Greece's (and possibly Europe's) leaders. There are strong drives by these groups for financial assistance to Palestinians in Palestine through fundraising activities, such as a Greek-Palestinian campaign to save Palestinian trees and the '1 euro for the children of Palestine' appeal partially organised by the GSEE. Summer camps for Palestinian children, brought over from Palestine have also been organised and there is a campaign to support and raise money for Palestinians held in Israeli



jails. This support for Palestinians within Greece also potentially spills into the European socialist scene via Greek groups with European affiliation.

It seems that Greek support of Palestinians is continuing and perhaps increasing. One only has to look at the reception in Greece in June 2002 of the two exiled Palestinians who were besieged by Israeli troops in the Church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem. As one of them stresses, in an interview with Athanasiadis (2002): “We left Palestine and we arrived in Palestine. The Greeks received us with warm hospitality”. Athanasiadis (2002) reiterates that Greece is one of Europe’s most pro-Palestinian countries, pointing out that:

*Athens...has been displaying enthusiastic support in recent months particularly after Israel’s re-occupation of self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza on the 29<sup>th</sup> March. A recent gallop poll revealed that 94% of Greeks were against Israel’s recent invasion of the occupied West Bank, 85% held a negative opinion of Ariel Sharon and 89% supported Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat.*

With the advent of a conservative government in 2004, however, it remains to be seen whether overt official and public support for Palestinians will continue in the same way.

One always has to keep in mind this crucial contextual information and support and the effects it has had on Palestinian lives and identities in Athens. The favouritism towards Palestinians is also made all the more interesting given the somewhat negative attitude of the Greek government and public towards migrants generally. What it does illuminate potentially, however, is how political institutions, NGOs and officials can have mutually beneficial relationships with migrants and those in diaspora. It is important to consider how both individuals and groups get involved in such relationships and what the outcomes are for all parties involved. Certainly support for Palestinians is linked to many factors, but one must not forget the (uneven) power structures and relations in place and how different groups and people ‘play the game’ to get what they want, in terms of support for their particular goals, which is often very hard to uncover. Crucially, this support does not mean that all Palestinians in Athens are treated fairly and



feel politically included. Even if as a group Palestinians are not overly discriminated against, it is one thing for them to be supported and quite another for them to feel able to participate politically in Greece and to have a say in the political, social and economic decisions that affect their lives and those of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. However, this case study may be able to illustrate how such positive relationships between Greeks and Palestinians have influenced Palestinian notions of home and belonging as well as their tendencies towards political advocacy and feelings of empowerment.

This research on the Palestinian diaspora in Athens attempts to add to research on Palestinians living in diaspora outside the context of the Middle East, which tend to be neglected in existing studies. There do not appear to be clear-cut trends in the nature of Palestinian identities, feelings of politicisation and experiences of political action and advocacy throughout Europe. Although this rightly suggests the diversity of the Palestinian diaspora, it also points to the fact that more research is necessary to understand these differences. These may be dependant on a number of factors. These include the level of host country support for the Palestinian cause, the make-up of particular communities (in terms of age, gender, class and generation), the nature and intensity of cross-border connections to the homeland, as well as networks between those in diaspora, the host society and other migrants and refugees. In addition, the ability (and desire) of those in diaspora to obtain citizenship, permanent residency or asylum may also be important.

The use of Athens and Greece as a destination of part of the Palestinian diaspora may shed some light on some of these issues, as there are particular factors to consider here. To reiterate points raised above, Greece is the closest European Union country to the Middle East and there have been close relations between Greek and Palestinian leaders such as Yasser Arafat in the past. Popular (and to a lesser extent, political) support for the Palestinian cause remains high. Greek national identity appears to be closely guarded. As a result, non-Greeks find it hard to obtain Greek citizenship and asylum seekers find it even harder to claim asylum. There also appear to be intense symbolic and material cross-border connections between Greece and Palestine as well as the Middle East. Such factors may influence Palestinian identities and understandings of



difference as well as perceptions and realities of inclusion and exclusion, political participation and activism within Greece.

It is important to understand how these specific factors merge and influence diasporic Palestinian identities and politicised actions in Athens. At the same time, one of the aims of this research is for it to be applicable and of use in understanding other diasporic and migrant groups who may have to deal with similar issues. In particular, it can add to vital knowledge on the interlinkages between ‘identity’ and politicisation as well as the ways in which such peoples negotiate everyday identities in relation to and as a consequence of (im)mobilities, territorial attachments (and detachments), political affiliations and (dis)unities.

### **Outline of thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Having introduced the aims of this research and provided contextual information concerning the Palestinian diaspora, Chapter Two outlines the key ideas, theories and debates that inform and underlie the thesis. A synopsis of the main methodologies employed follows in Chapter Three, where the importance of positionality and reflexivity are also discussed. Chapters Four to Seven form the analysis of this thesis, in which politicised, hybrid and strategic notions of ‘Palestinian-ness’ are critically explored using the empirical findings of this research. Perceptions of home, belonging and the realities of living ‘in-between’ are dealt with in Chapter Four, whilst Chapter Five focuses on strategic and collective constructions of ‘unity’, ‘shared consciousness’ and ‘community’ tensions. The last two analytical chapters attempt to explicitly link Palestinian identities to the realities and processes of citizenship, representation, resistance and advocacy. Chapter Six discusses the coupling and decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’. Chapter Seven focuses on perceptions and realities of opportunities and hindrances within contested diasporic spaces in terms of political activism (in the form of advocacy) as well as feelings of resistance and empowerment. Chapter Eight brings together the major themes and findings of this research in order to highlight its intellectual significance within human geography and beyond.



### **Theoretical perspectives: debating notions of diaspora, hybridity, postcolonialism, ‘identity’ and nationalism**

In its endeavour to understand and explore the constructions and negotiations of identities and political actions of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens, this research uses a number of different, but linked theories. To begin with, a brief outline of globalisation and cross-border connections and their underlying relevance to the research are given. The sections that follow discuss how this thesis is approaching and using concepts of postcolonialism, hybridity, diaspora, nationalism and citizenship in order to interrogate notions of ‘identity’.

#### **Cross-border connections: grounding the global**

This research is based on the idea that the global and the local co-exist in people’s everyday lives in surprising, confusing and ambivalent ways, but that at the same time, there are many different opportunities and hindrances that culminate in lives, feelings, actions and spaces that are not only hybrid and ‘in-between’, but also grounded and situated. As Al Ali (2002: 100) stresses: “it seems imperative to ground transnational practices firmly in material circumstances and avoid getting lost in post-modern landscapes of elusive hybrid nomads and cosmopolitans”. It is important, therefore, to carry out in-depth geographical research that is able to analyse the complexities of the endless conjunctions and enmeshing of times and spaces for real people.

If the contemporary world is characterised by movement, globalisation and migration, the spaces created and identities negotiated in the process also need to be re-theorised in terms of the connections people, migrants and those in diaspora have with each other. Transnational and cross-border networks can be seen as integral parts of transnational and diasporic communities as they are a major way that perceptions of collective and shared identities are articulated and grounded (Vertovec 2001). Migrants and those in diaspora are being increasingly connected with one another through mass communication and transport. As a



result, there are ever increasing opportunities for the 'here' and the 'there' to actually come together via networks and linkages between people and places, within people's minds, symbolically as well as virtually and materially through physical connections. The symbolic relevance of the transgressive qualities of networks 'in motion', therefore, must not be forgotten in terms of people's actual lives. As Yeoh and Huang (2000: 414) point out: "These networks are not only imagined ties of a shared past or future, or connecting flows of cultural ideas and icons, but also embodied networks between groups of people." It seems that networks imply movement, unlimited flows between spaces, an endless joining and crisscrossing web of times and spaces that have to be untangled and traced. According to Portes *et al.* (1999: 219), what are truly new aspects of transnationalism (and of diaspora) "are the high intensity of exchanges, the new modes of transacting and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustained basis".

The ability of people and groups to become involved in transnational or diasporic political practices are seen as potentially enabling an increase in rights and benefits for both groups and individuals and the ability to resist and effect changes to their lives. As Guarnizo and Smith (1998: 19) also stress, "politically organised transnational networks and movements also weld together transnational connections by constituting structures of meaning". An example of such 'structures of meaning' include 'principled issue networks' attempting to advance such causes as political and human rights and environmental protection, which are not limited to physical mobility, but are dependent on the symbolic exchange of cultural objects and commodities, as well as social and monetary interchanges in the form, for example, of remittances. Keck and Sikkink (1999: 90) point out that advocacy networks are able "to 'frame' issues to make them more comprehensible to target audiences, to attract attention and encourage action and to 'fit' with favourable institutional venues". They point out that such networks can be understood as political spaces in which "differently situated actors negotiate formally and informally the social cultural and political meaning of their joint enterprises" (*ibid.*). At the same time, it is interesting to note Melucci's (1989: 71) observations of the existence of "submerged networks or latent social movements of people who are not consciously part of a movement,



but who are innovating or talking to each other”. For Melucci, social movements, change, resistance and empowerment are woven into the fabric of everyday life, and are based on “the capacity and will [of people] to re-appropriate space and time” (*ibid.*). In this way, the processes of being political and being politically active may not be overtly realised but are dependent on daily cross-border networks of migrants and those in diaspora.

Cross-border networks and their consequences in terms of advocacy and empowerment need to be carefully analysed in such a way that their connectedness and consistency, as well as autonomy and disconnectedness (Castells 1996), are brought to the surface. Networks connect, but they can do so unevenly. The power relations involved are extremely hard to pin down because of the grounded and unbounded nature of power (Radcliffe 1999) yet understanding how people and places are involved in such power flows and inequalities is crucial. Networks operate at and across numerous and integrating scales that are “radically relational” (Howitt 2002), as well as situated, allowing alternative more flexible and dynamic theorisations of the local and the global in which the actions of both those in power and those disempowered or resisting can be explored (Perreault 2003).

Connections and networks allow people to maintain constant imagined and concrete links with others,

*offering us different possibilities for how to re-locate ourselves. On the one hand, connections (in the imagining of self, sameness or difference) can make us more certain of our own identities and thus foster an insular sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. On the other hand, connections offer us new possibilities of sharing in difference through interaction.*

(Valentine 1999: 58)

This is why conceptualisations of boundary crossings and movement are so important. Cross-border connections allow new and varied ways of thinking about spatial interactions because of the implicit relevance to people’s lives. This is not only how the local and the global are connected, but also how both can be visualised together in ways that allow people to be constructed as subjects and



agents of change. At the same time, researchers such as Hanafi (2005) dealing with diasporic communities, are concerned about the factors that inhibit the creation and continuation of real and virtual networks and connections both within the host country and to the homeland. The importance of boundedness and unboundedness to migrants and those in diaspora must also be taken into account as they may feel connected and disconnected, attached and detached to the homeland and host country as a result of the nature and intensity of their cross-border networks.

This research is embedded in current theorisations and lived experiences of globalisation. The world is perceived as becoming increasingly connected, with people living out lives that are physically separate but joined via technology and mass communications. As a result, distances between places appear to be shrinking and spaces are increasingly interlapping (see, for example, Appadurai 1990; Giddens 1990 and Harvey's 1990 concept of time-space compression). This view of the world as coming together must also, however, be counterbalanced. For example, Hannerz (1996: 19) stresses: "globalisation has to be brought down to earth" so that such abstract theories are made relevant to the concrete everyday realities of people's lives. This is why careful analysis of the ways in which globalisation and cross-border connections are affecting perceptions of home, belonging and the relationships between 'identity' negotiations and citizenship are particularly important (Croucher 2004). The nature of poststructuralist and post-modern celebrations of hybridity, heterogeneity, fluidity and diversity, which allow a re-conceptualisation and deconstruction of arbitrary categories, may be attractive. However, the danger is that a dependence on the theoretical may not be matched by practical research that is aimed at understanding how people are trying to create what they see as change for the better, or are trapped within uneven power relations. It is much easier to theorise on the radical potential that living 'in-between' can have in terms of postcolonial resistance, as Bhabha (1994) has done, but it is another matter to carry out grounded, messy and complicated research on real people. Such in-depth qualitative research on the everyday is necessary to show



*our cultural insights and our attention to everyday practice and the relations of power and illuminate how the operations of globalisation are translated into cultural logics that inform behaviour, identities and relationships.* (Ong 1999: 22)

The concepts of globalisation and cross-border networks may help to explore notions and realities of diasporic existence as both focus on the nature and effects of boundaries and movement of people. The idea of diaspora, in particular, denotes and stresses networks of sharing, familiarity, ‘co-responsibility’ (Werbner 2000) and belonging that extend well beyond the realms of defined countries. The term ‘cross-border’ connections and networks may portray the realities of those in diaspora better than the term ‘transnational’ if one is aiming to think ‘beyond the nation-state’ and conceptualise a globalising world. The presence of intense cross-border networks (both symbolic and material) between Greece and Palestine (as well as other Middle Eastern countries) form the basis for the analysis of Palestinian lives and ‘Palestinian-ness’ in Athens as diasporic and hybrid. Rather than scrutinise in detail the networks that exist, this research aims to uncover the results of such networks in terms of their influences and effects on cultural, social and political constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’, home, belonging, ‘shared consciousness’ and political advocacy in diasporic spaces.

### **Postcolonial perspectives**

This research uses postcolonialism as an important underlying framework in tandem with diaspora, in an attempt to carry out research that brings together theoretical and practical aspects of Palestinian lives and identities in Athens. Postcolonial perspectives are crucial to this research as they potentially allow the theorisation of people’s lives and experiences as marginalised and silent, as well as empowered and resistant. Postcolonial theories stress the recognition of the former and the imminent possibility of the latter for people affected by colonialism and other forms of oppression. Postcolonial perspectives also force us to re-think notions of ‘authenticity’, pure/native ‘identity’ and their relationships with politicisation and political action. Although there are



numerous strands of postcolonial theory, there are certain themes that appear to be prevalent. Many of the debates on postcolonialism are literary based and apart from brief introductions to the main ones, I am more concerned with the relevance of such debates to my research. These are discussed first, followed by an examination of how human geographers have used such theories in their research.

Postcolonial perspectives insist on the reworking and deconstructing of homogenous western knowledges, assumptions and ways of looking at the world. Implicit in this is the importance of allowing voices that have been 'lost' or suppressed by colonisers to be heard, and in the process, a reassertion and re-creating of a 'hidden' past has the potential to materialise. This does not mean, however, a return to an essentialised 'native' or traditional 'pure' culture unadulterated and uncontaminated by colonialism and the West. Rather, it has to be remembered that all cultures are hybrid (Hall 1990) and are constantly changing (Brydon 1995) as the local and the global, the past and the present interact. Said (1978; 1994) reminds us of this and the dangers of essentialising people and cultures who are deemed to be somehow different as 'Other'. This is what he claims the West has been and is still guilty of. According to Said, the 'Orient', which symbolises those cultures alien to the West, has been constructed, represented and portrayed systematically in stereotypical and simplistic ways in literature and in the mass media, for example, a tendency that continues to this day. The outcome of this has been the formation of pervasive discourses of imperialist domination over such people and places, creating unjust and unequal relations of power. Such artificial 'imaginary geographies' can have potentially very real and devastating consequences and highlight the importance of the issue of representation.

A major consideration within postcolonialism is the voices of colonised people. This means that postcolonial theories must be historical, politicised and self-aware in their projects. These three facets help facilitate the processes of representation and agency of such peoples. This has to occur because of the continuing effects of past colonialism and present occupations, such as those in Palestine (Young 2001). It is only through recognition that the past and the present are inextricably tied that the manifestations of the past can be actively



dealt with and resisted. Postcolonial perspectives force past histories to occupy awkward positions in the present, so that the two occupy an uneasy co-existence, which can lead to potential resistance and recovery of alternative visions, memories and experiences. Such perspectives are particularly relevant in terms of research with groups such as Palestinians who are arguably still under colonial occupation and who are constantly materially and immaterially dealing with past and present domination, displacement and exile (Young 2001; Sidaway 2000). As Jacobs (1996: 22) stresses: “diasporic groups...still face the force of neo-colonial formations and live lives shaped by the ideologies of domination and the practices of prejudice established by imperialism”.

Above all, perhaps, the relevance of postcolonial theories is their optimism and hope for social change through resistance and agency. Colonial and postcolonial worlds and realities are constantly clashing and merging. The ‘post’ in postcolonial does not mean we live in a world free from the clutches of colonialism and oppression. Both continue to exist on a considerable scale. Rather, by seeing the world as postcolonial, people are enabled and empowered to visualise and recreate their lives and pasts without the often-destructive and overwhelming influences of colonial and Western stereotypical representations and knowledges. In the process, there is the possibility for unravelling prevailing power inequalities between people and places as the subversive and the ambivalent are forced to appear, albeit in partial and confusing ways. The ways in which people do come together and potentially feel united in order to resist have to be explored. Such strategic affiliations and negotiations demonstrate how people can feel ‘the same’ or share similar ideas and at the same time, are different, with their own dynamic hybrid, and ambiguous constructions, feelings and actions. To this end, Ashcroft *et al.* (1995: 56) point out that “the value of postcolonial discourse is that it provides a methodology for considering the dialogue of similarity and difference”. Minh-ha (1991) also stresses the importance of understanding and locating the concept of being the same yet different in terms of identities, and of being both insider and outsider, ideas which are crucial for understanding the dynamic and also momentarily fixated relations between people and places.



As a set of frameworks, postcolonial theories might allow the local and the global to come together, so that the interconnected local and global spaces and networks of diasporic lives can be traced and untangled in ways that are not merely relativist. The world is a heterogeneous place in which to live, but people are placed in it in very different, uneven ways. An emphasis purely on postmodern diversity and difference is seen to ignore this and the ways in which certain people and groups pursue and maintain power, but also resist and are agents of change (Sardar 1998). People are not necessarily passive recipients of colonial authority. Thus, it is seen as imperative that a 'subject' be formed to act as a starting point from which to posit change. This subject is an agent of change, similar to the notion of the 'subaltern' born out of the Subaltern Studies group in India in an attempt to understand and empower India's 'peasant consciousness'. Such voices which have not been heard before are, however, neither necessarily coherent nor unified, and will have been affected in some manner by imperialism, something that must always be recognised (Spivak 1988).

It is not enough to simply document or recover lost or marginalised voices, although this is important. Without sustained research into how people become and continue to feel marginalised and disempowered as well as how they are able to improve their situation through processes of resistance, the elite groups and networks of power that exist would continue unchallenged. Encouraging such people who have not been heard before to speak out and have an audience can potentially allow past and present injustices and everyday realities and difficulties to be recognised, allowing them to become empowered 'subjects'. This is particularly important for groups such as the Palestinians who feel that their histories (especially in the years before and after the founding of the state of Israel) have been silenced in official Israeli discourses (Farah 2003: 9). This has led to several attempts to 'rewrite' Israeli and Palestinian histories so that not only can the voices of those whose lives were severely affected be heard, but also to make the Israeli state accountable for the problems it has created for Palestinians.<sup>1</sup> It is only through such efforts that present Palestinian claims for self-determination, the Right of Return and compensation can be understood and

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on the work of the so-called 'New Israeli Historians' see, for example, Ragan and Shlaim (2001), Pappé (1999) and Morris (1987).



acted upon. The question remains of how to represent this 'subject' in ways that are not dominating, homogenising or stereotypical. There have been those who have argued that any contact with such 'subjects' by researchers based in Western institutions taints the representation process as such research is inextricably tied to Western knowledges and ways of seeing and understanding the world (Parry 1995). After all, it is these uneven power relations that postcolonialism is trying to dismantle. Representation is always a difficult issue that confronts not only the researcher or intellectual but also individuals and groups who are situated, grounded and engaged in constant subjective positionings between times/spaces and past/present/future. For the researcher, issues of representation are always pertinent and problematic and one way to partially overcome them is by being vigilant and transparent about one's own positionality during and after the research process.

The importance given to a stable, identifiable and distinct 'identity' seen as necessary for processes of political resistance and empowerment forms part of the implicit and difficult relationship between coloniser/colonised. Central to this is the problem of constructions of 'home' and belonging. Nation-states are often seen as the rightful and accepted 'homes' of identities (or 'national identity'). This is problematic and especially so when one considers the vast array of past/present colonialisms, occupations, imperialisms, oppressions that one could perceive as affecting almost all peoples materially or symbolically at some point in time/space. These oppressions very possibly do not appear to be immediately located within the current configuration of nation-states but could be seen as being intricately related to them, as current territorial states may 'hide' past imperialisms, silencing, marginalisation and so forth. Yet the emphasis by postcolonial theories on the nation-state may potentially ignore such important relationships. As LeBlanc (2002: 251) suggests, we need to consider "the limitations of postcolonial theory and the necessity to rethink "space" outside the cultural and territorial confines of nationalist discourse." In addition, one must also problematise (and not romanticise) liberation and resistance struggles that are based on simplistic, stereotypical relationships between 'identity', statehood and territory and consider the intense cross-border connections and power relations involved in the process within and beyond nation-states.



Bhabha (1994) provides us with extensive theorisations on the relationships between the colonial and postcolonial and in particular, the ones colonised people have with colonial as well as postcolonial realities. His work stresses how hybrid 'Third Space', situated 'in-between' the binary categories of colonial and postcolonial, of self and other, of 'here' and 'there', is able to mimic colonial authority and imperialism subversively because of its continuous 'enigmatic questioning'. This ambivalence and mimicry, which is both part of and separate from colonialism, is what transforms people from 'abject objects' into 'subjects of history' (Young 2001: 355) who are potential agents of change. These are lives, times and spaces that are real, surreal, elusive and evade simple analysis, in a constant state of negotiation. As Young (1995: 27) stresses, hybridity "suggests the impossibility of essentialism". Rose (1995) argues that the potential in Bhabha's writing is radical because of its liminal and opaque nature, which refuses to be pinned down. His 'Third Spaces' are hybrid in the sense that they are both the same and other, the 'here' and the 'there' are brought together in an uneasy tension. There is no easy way to theorise difference: "space becomes something which itself must be made different" (Rose 1995: 369). What Bhabha does not do, however, is provide a way to relate this to real people's lives: "his spatialities remain analytic, not lived" (*ibid.*: 372) and are arguably, therefore, limited, for all their radical potential. The theoretical possibilities of Bhabha's writing, as well as other cultural and postcolonial writings have to be theorised in tandem with the practical, if their full potential is to be realised. Within this thesis, hybridity is used to denote the 'in-between-ness' of Palestinian lives and actions. It stresses their position as juxtaposed uneasily but also potentially powerfully between 'here' and 'there', between colonial and postcolonial worlds, where spaces/times merge and affect their everyday lives and identities in surprising, ambivalent and confusing ways.

Postcolonial theories have also been criticised for being overly focused on the literary and theoretical. As Brydon (1995: 141) points out: "literature cannot be confused with social action". Although understanding and deconstructing past resistance movements and histories are very important, contemporary strategies of resistance and anti-colonial struggles must not be forgotten, as they are still an integral part to many people's lives. As Palestinians



in Athens negotiate their 'Palestinian-ness' and advocate the Palestinian cause, they may also be seen as engaging in what could be called contemporary strategies of *postcolonial* resistance. Although they may physically live away from the site of colonialism, they are still connected to it symbolically (and often materially too). It is only through carrying out material research on precisely how people whose histories have been silenced and who have been marginalised go about the processes of resistance that the realities of postcolonial existences may emerge. This reiterates the fact that there are indeed many neo-colonial relations between countries and peoples and that subsequent uneven power relations and oppression are not issues that can be relegated to the past.

This is where the importance of human geography lies. Human geographers are equipped, theoretically and practically to understand and explore the complexities and nuances of disjointed, hybrid and confusing colonial and postcolonial times and spaces that crisscross the past and the present, the old and the new, the here and the there. Mitchell (1997b) is critical of Bhabha's high levels of abstraction and removal from reality and is wary of premature celebrations of hybridity and in doing so she demonstrates the potential strength of a human geographical approach. Like Blunt (2005: 11), in her work on Anglo-Indian women, this thesis is concerned with the "material histories and geographies" of the Palestinian diaspora that whilst accepting the ability of hybridity to theoretically transgress borders, can ground it within real people's lives, feelings and experiences. In addition to this, despite having to recognise and deconstruct their own embeddedness in western, masculinist knowledges (McEwan 1998; Sidaway 2000), postcolonial geographies must not only "be alert to the continued fact of imperialism" (Sidaway 2000: 606), but also recognise that such geographies are the very spaces where such accepted and dominant geographical narratives can be potentially (dis)located. Geographers have stressed the importance of carrying out detailed, nuanced "historical and ethnographic studies of the diverse, material-cultural, multi-locale entanglements of [these] 'cognitive mappings' in situated theory/practice" (Cook and Harrison 2003: 312, citing Katz 2001, Miller 2002 and Thrift 2000). Cook and Harrison (*ibid.*: 310) also discuss how research that is underpinned by postcolonial theories should be aimed at revealing, de-legitimising, de-centring and re-



materialising the alternative and hybrid “messy, mixed-up, interconnected nature of histories, geographies and identities” that have been “neatly compartmentalised and opposed in European [and other] colonial discourses”.

According to Blunt and Rose (1994) rethinking space as fragmented and fluid is crucial to postcolonial representations by feminist geographers. In the process, a more subjective and situated politics of location, which problematises essentialist and transparent conceptions of space, is made possible. Robinson (1995) extends this argument to consider the concept of ‘speaking with’ people from other places and cultures as a way to engage with the ‘Other’ and to find “postcolonial ways of producing understandings and knowledge” (*ibid.*: 218). Dwyer (2002) illustrates the pertinence of using postcolonial geographical research to explore issues of ‘identity’ through a politics of positioning and negotiation. Her approach is useful because it demonstrates the particular applicability of postcolonialism within a geographical framework to contemporary concerns such as nationalism, home, homeland and belonging, which are of primary significance to this research. It is only through actual research on people’s lives that this reflexivity and the historical and contemporary symbolic and material relations between researcher and researched and consequently between the colonised and coloniser can be revealed. Besio (2003: 31), for example, stresses the importance of being aware of power relations, subjectivities and dialogue between “the post and colonial as processes that intersect and form both places and subjects”. She found that by engaging in research with people who have been subject to colonialism she “came to a greater understanding of colonialism’s lingering effects on postcolonial interactions.” Through her ethnographic research, she came ‘face-to-face’ with the realities of postcolonial interconnections (*ibid.*).

Geographical research informed by postcolonial theories may also be particularly sensitive to the often competing, ambivalent, hybrid but also nationalist and potentially essentialist forms that postcolonial and diasporic spaces and identities may take on. Such research is able to search for and understand diversity and difference as well as collectivities and similarities as ways in which people construct and negotiate themselves as positioned, subjective and strategic, in-between colonial oppression and postcolonial



resistance. In this way, the homogenisation of ‘identity’ and ‘solidarity’ may be undermined, deconstructed or fractured. This can allow for individual and gendered expression, representation and flexibility whilst at the same time, enabling people to come together as groups and share knowledges, experiences and actions that may potentially change their lives for the better. Above all, perhaps it is important to locate “postcolonial geographies on the material, rather than on the solely textual or abstract terrains” and of moving beyond analyses of European imperialisms (Blunt and McEwan 2002: 6). If postcolonial theories are to remain contested and provisional (Nash 2002) by virtue of their deconstructive qualities, it is useful for postcolonial geographies to interact with transnational and diasporic perspectives, so that the binaries of ‘them’ and ‘us’ constructed and implied in local and global interactions can be unsettled.

### **Interrogating diaspora and transnationalism**

Diaspora is often theorised together with transnationalism. As Tölölyan (1991: 4) notes, “diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment”. Wahlbeck (1998: 14) has also described diaspora as “one real and lived transnational experience”. Such approaches may also explain why the journal *Diaspora* has ‘Journal of transnational studies’ as its subheading. William Safran (1991: 83-84) provided the following definition of diasporas in the first issue of this journal:

*expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original specific “centre” to two or more “peripheral”, or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe they are not – are perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should*



*collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.*

Contemporary definitions of diaspora invariably revolve around these key aspects. Diaspora is thus often used to describe groups of people who feel they possess a shared ‘ethnicity’, ‘culture’ and traditions, have been displaced and are dispersed round the world. For example, Sheffer (1999) claims that new ‘ethno-national diasporas’ are emerging and Stack (1999) focuses on ‘ethnic groups as emerging transnational actors’. On the one hand, diaspora has become synonymous with celebrations of hybridity, ‘travelling’ or nomadic, fluid identities and living ‘in-between’ spaces and cultures. On the other hand, it has also been seen as the portraying ‘closed’ homogenous and stereotypical ‘ethnic’ and religious entities round the world (Werbner 1998), creating constructions of nationalism that may be exclusive or ‘extreme’ (Carter 2005) and that are based on more purist notions of a defined ‘culture’ and ‘identity’. As Soysal (2000: 2) notes: “the dominant conceptualisations of diaspora presumptively accept the formation of tightly bounded communities and solidarities (on the basis of common cultural and ethnic references) between places of origin and arrival”. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002: 324) also stress that:

*diaspora studies often trace dispersed populations no matter where they have settled, focusing on dynamics of interconnection, nostalgia and memory and identity within a particular population, relating them to a particular homeland. No longer confined to a territorially limited entity, the nation is extending across different terrains and places but nevertheless imagined as an organic, integrated whole. In this modus operandi, the nation-state building processes that impinge upon diasporic populations in various locations are usually overlooked.*



Although Cohen (1999) has advocated the importance of a ‘primordial identity’, he has also described diasporas (1997: 2) as:

*positioned somewhere between nation-states and ‘travelling cultures’ in that they involve dwelling in a nation-state in a physical sense, but travelling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-state’s space/time zone.*

Cohen’s description here may be useful in part but it, like many other positive accounts of diasporas, ignores the ways in which diasporas construct collective identities and potentially self-essentialising or homogenising nationalisms through the processes of re-territorialisation, which need to be analysed in tandem with hybridity and fluidity. Although Carter’s (2005) call for a geopolitics of diaspora to take such issues into account is useful, the notion of ‘ethnic identity’ appears to be seen as given and unproblematic and is, therefore, reminiscent of Werbner’s problem with how diasporas have been conceptualised. For Werbner (2000: 7) it is the daily materiality of diasporas that is important in order to bring together theoretical accounts (or diaspora aesthetics) and empirical accounts (or ‘real’ political mobilization) of diaspora so that they are “mutually constitutive”. Werbner also goes on to stress that we must move beyond easy assumptions about such relationships and of using words such as ‘solidarity’ and ‘loyalty’ to describe diasporic cultures and political activism.

The strength of the notion of diaspora, as used in this thesis, lies somewhere in-between positive and negative depictions of diasporas, recognising that elements of both are important to diasporic existence. In particular, while this thesis views diasporic ‘Palestinian-ness’ as hybrid, fluid, multiple and dynamic, it is also very aware of the potentially homogenising constructions of collective ‘national identity’ that occur as strategic essentialisms in order to advocate causes and obtain rights and gain eventual statehood. As a result, it takes into account that processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, boundedness and unboundedness may be occurring.

Diasporic identities are often seen as being constructed and negotiated as here and there, on multiple levels and as ‘in-between’. Cultural interpretations



that emphasize and advocate the importance of hybridity and border crossings as ways to understand an increasingly globalised and interconnected world (Clifford 1997) are useful. As a result, identities are seen as hybrid (Bhabha 1994), malleable, ever-changing representations and always in-the-making (Hall 1990). Such views stress the incomplete, unstable and fluid nature of identities and cultures generally, insisting on the fallacy of hegemonic, artificial, all-encompassing boundaries put around people and places. As Lavie and Swedenburg (1996: 10) amongst many others (e.g. Said 1994, Welsch 1999) reiterate: “all cultures turn out to be, in various ways, hybrid”. Therefore, it is important to conceptualise migrants and those in diaspora as being perpetually in movement and travelling (Yeoh and Huang 2000: 415). Anzaldúa’s (1987: 217) work on the hybrid border identities between Mexico and the U.S depicts the transgressive and empowering qualities of living and feeling ‘in-between’, whereby it is possible to define oneself inwardly by looking outwards without rigid ‘identity’ boundaries, in a dynamic, endlessly shifting world. This is perhaps best illustrated in the closing lines of her poem ‘To live in the Borderlands means you’:

To survive the Borderlands

you must live *sin fronteras*

be a crossroads.

Though Anzaldúa’s words and work are inspiring, life ‘in the margins’ is not necessarily easy. In emotional terms, as Said (1986: 63) points out, “every direct route to the interior, and consequently the interior itself, is either blocked or pre-empted. The most we can hope for is to find margins.” Hybrid lives and identities are, therefore, not necessarily unbounded: “diaspora journeys are...neither purely emancipatory nor reactionary: instead they are provisional, dependant on the confluence of circumstances and continually elude foreclosure” and are “ridden with disruptions, detours and multidestinations” (Yeoh and Huang 2000: 415). In addition, the continuing and uneven forces of power and domination that affect people’s lives need to be analysed (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). The work of Glick Schiller *et al.* (1999) is a good example of an approach



that is sensitive to such considerations. They argue that migrants and those in diaspora are connected to more than one society simultaneously and that it is important to extend the bounded analytical categories of social science. Yet their approach also stresses the importance of recognising that dynamic experiences operate within a framework of a global capitalist system and of structural conditions that are given and beyond people's control, such as the nation-state. Thus, migrants and those in diaspora are perceived as both bounded and unbounded. It is important to re-iterate that while conceptually the notions of diaspora and transnationalism may enable us to transgress boundaries and counteract 'container concepts' of assimilation as migrants and those in diaspora are increasingly 'deterritorialised' (Basch *et al.* 1994), at the same time "place continues to count" (Kivisto 2001). Migrants and those in diaspora are often grounded by material institutional, economic, political factors that can mean a denial of rights in their country of residence. As Ong (1999: 16) stresses:

*in our desire to find definite breaks between the territorially bounded and the deterritorialised, the oppressive and the progressive, and the stable and the unstable, we sometimes overlook complicated accommodations, alliances, and creative tensions between the nation-state and mobile capital, between diaspora and nationalism, or between the influx of immigrants and the multicultural state. Attention to specific histories and geopolitical situations will reveal that such simple oppositions between transnational forces and the nation-state cannot be universally sustained.*

Hybridity may theoretically involve a creative mix of old and new, of here and there, but as it is actively negotiated through time and space, it can be both easy and difficult for people to deal with. As a result, for those in diaspora, the notions of home and hybridity are often intertwined. The ambivalence and complexity of such words should not detract from the very real implications both can have, practically, on people's lives, feelings and actions. It is important to understand diasporic perceptions and feelings of hybridity, home and belonging



as they can all play a large role in creating collective and politicised constructions of the homeland, 'solidarity' and 'shared consciousness'.

By studying those in diaspora we may also be better able or equipped to understand the changing relationships, power relations, ambivalences and tensions between people and places as they negotiate their contemporary and contextualised, historicized identities and collectivities across and within boundaries. According to Lindholm Schulz (2003: 9) diasporas need to have "strong collective images of the homeland" and she stresses that "diaspora requires a transnational existence – a dispersal and a diffusion throughout the world". By this, we can assume that what is needed in order to maintain the diaspora are cross-border connections as well as constructions of a unified 'national identity' that link the diaspora to its homeland. In the process, assumptions are often made on the relationships between territory, 'identity', nationalism and often citizenship, where self-determination is seen as a goal. It is such assumptions that this thesis is seeking to better understand and explore.

For those in diaspora, 'here' and 'there', past and present may come together uneasily and ambiguously as both exist within their lives simultaneously. As Soysal (2000: 2) notes: "diaspora is a past invented for the present, and perpetually laboured into shapes and meanings consistent with the present". The spaces those in diaspora create are a reflection of this 'in-between-ness', which at the same time may be seen as potentially useful for constructions of unifying and defining political and 'cultural unities'; however, they are also hybrid as they make sense of living 'here' in the present and a historicized feeling of belonging 'there'. Diasporic activism and advocacy within the country of residence needs to be placed within this tension between constructing unities and dealing with disunities as well as within a need to advocate a cause 'here' that is inevitably linked to the homeland 'there'. Diasporic activism can, therefore, be seen as the merging of collective imaginings of belonging 'there' to the daily realities of living and being politicised and politically active 'here'.

Despite the fact that diasporas are often seen as operating in the same way as transnationalism, if the homeland is not a distinct and defined nation-state, as in the case of Palestinians, feelings, networks and connections cannot be transnational in the sense that there is no Palestinian state at the other end. It is



for this reason that the notion of diaspora can be thought of as potentially more useful than transnationalism for the purposes of this research. If the notion of transnationalism is deconstructed, we come to realise that it is based firmly within the realm of nation-states, hence, the idea of crossing or transgressing state boundaries or borders. It still very much sees the world as divided up into nation-states with their associated cultural and national identities, or as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002: 324) put it: “transnationalism studies...reproduces the standard image of a world divided into nations and thus naturalizes this vision of the world in new forms”. This in itself is unsurprising. The problem with transnational approaches and their bias towards the nation-state is perhaps their inability to examine how contemporary movements (metaphorically and physically) may be changing the nature of the state, or making the state in its present form problematic. For those displaced within diasporas, the need for national identity that can lead to nationalism and state formation or at least the ability to have a defined ‘territory’ they can call home and identify with has to be explored. Diasporic groups try to create specific political versions of their ‘identity’ that they feel comfortable with and that can serve as ‘fictive unity’ (Robins and Aksoy 2001), which they may perceive as necessary in order to achieve the ‘nationalism’ they feel they must have in readiness for a future state.

Far from being a static notion, ‘Palestinian-ness’ is understood here as being continuously negotiated in representations and articulations of differences and similarities within ‘communities’ in Greece and that such constructions are intimately tied up in evocations of and connections to the homeland. By linking an exploration of diasporic subjectivities with spaces where politicisation and advocacy may potentially occur, this research is able to examine the close connections between diasporic political, social and cultural constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’, diasporic activism in Greece and cross-border networks to (and imaginings of) the homeland. In the process, we may be able to gain a heightened understanding of how people in diaspora who are both in flux metaphorically or unbounded but often stationary physically (or bounded) are able to construct notions of belonging and identities that may enable the flexible and strategic use of time and space.



## Problematizing nationalism

It is necessary to examine the notions of nationalism and ‘national identity’ in order to explain why this thesis does not use these terms to describe the complex processes of collectivity and ‘shared consciousness’ that Palestinians appear to be experiencing. Standardised definitions of nationalism and ‘national identity’ are provided first as a basis for subsequent interrogation. The nation-state appears to be a major institution governing and organising people’s lives today. Put simply, it is assumed that the people within it constitute a nation, who feel they belong to the nation-state. As Shapiro (2000: 80) notes:

*the primary understanding of the modern ‘nation’ segment of the ‘nation-state’ is that a nation embodies a coherent culture, united on the basis of shared descent or, at least, incorporating a ‘people’ with a historically stable coherence.*

This form of belonging to a nation-state is usually called nationalism. According to Smith (1999: 37), nationalism is:

*an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity of a human population, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’. By a ‘nation’, I mean a named human population sharing a historical territory, common myths and memories, a mass public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members.*

‘National identity’, assumed to be a prerequisite to nationalism, is seen as requiring collective imaginings in the form of imagined communities (Anderson 1983), where a strong symbolic attachment to one another and the state must be imagined in order to create a shared sense of belonging and sustain a nation-state, which can no longer be maintained by traditional face-to-face contact. In order to create a ‘national identity’, however, a nation is assumed to exist: “the ‘nation’” is “a human group that is conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, is attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common



past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself” (Guibernau 2001: 242).

The problem at the heart of such arguments is that it is assumed that there is a necessary and naturalised ‘normal’ relationship between territory, ‘national identity’ and citizenship, whereby ‘national identity’ is neatly located in a clearly demarcated and bounded nation-state. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002: 302) have noted that what they call ‘methodological nationalism’ is “the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world”. It is such assumptions, they argue, that have deeply influenced academic theories within the social sciences and that may explain why “the lack of a temporal and spatial fit between state and nation is one of the main causes of many of today’s national conflicts” (Smith 1999: 38). Despite the relevance of the homeland for diasporic and migrant populations, the fact that there are thousands of perceived homelands located in less than 200 nation-states needs to be taken into account. Allowing all indigenous groups with perceived homelands and rights to self-determination and statehood clearly would lead to chaos given the current configuration of nation-states. Yet, the mainstream and widely accepted notions of nationalism, ‘national identity’ and the nation-state would seem to suggest that such claims to self-determination are not only justified but to be encouraged. This paradox is not only evident, but extremely problematic for both nation-states and those seeking nation-states as there is no way to resolve it given the current state of affairs.

The ongoing situation in Israel/Palestine amongst many other locations, testifies to this endemic problem that will continue as long as the assumption that a ‘national identity’ needs a defined territory to realise a nation-state and that within a nation-state, there is one nation of people that belong exclusively to that nation-state. Khalidi (1997: 209) illustrates the salience of such issues when he asks the open-ended question of whether the limited success in creating a Palestinian ‘identity’ will “finally allow the achievement of self-determination, statehood, and national independence the modern world has taught us is the “natural state” of peoples with an independent national identity like the Palestinians”. Statements such as this are justified by current understandings and uses of the relationships between ‘national identity’, nationalism, and territorial



nation-states. Such relationships need to be theorised together and are very important for those in diaspora, such as Palestinians who feel the need for self-determination and statehood in which they may perceive their 'identity' and rights can be protected.

Constructions of nationalism amongst those seeking statehood have also been theorised as responses to threats of violence or perceived 'antagonisms'. This is violence

*members of that not-yet-existent nation perceive as inflicted upon them by others who make it impossible for them to exist in anything other than an autonomous state. An antagonism, rather than threatening a pre-existing and self-conscious entity, brings the community it threatens into being through that threat, and gives it shape and identity to what it threatens through placing it at risk. Perceptions of a violence afflicting a diverse range of persons give rise to a concept of a 'national enemy' and, through that concept, to the idea of solidarity with those whom that enemy opposes.*

(Bowman 2003: 319-20)

This idea may add to our understanding of why some diasporic groups in exile come to feel the need for 'unity' and 'solidarity' (or what Bowman calls the 'logic of mobilisation') and at the same time, how and why differences in 'identity' may be played out and accentuated as a result of feelings of insecurity and risk. Bowman goes on to comment on the repercussions of such nationalist imaginaries in terms of us/them relationships, where the world is perceived as "divided between the good, but threatened, community of an 'us' and the evil community of a 'them', existing solely to destroy that 'us'" (*ibid.*: 321).

Deconstructing or interrogating nationalism can be seen as an attempt to understand why people within and without nation-states come to feel 'united' within a defined 'identity' as well as to appreciate the intricate and dynamic negotiations of tensions, conflicts, disunities, exclusions, inclusions, power relations that they undergo and have to deal with in the process. As Fine (1999: 154) points out: "Nationalism is a fickle beast. In its best moods, it liberates



human beings from colonial oppression and unites people previously fragmented but it also excludes those deemed not to belong and demands the active assent of its 'own' nationals". Armstrong (1998) is also wary of nationalism, which he argues does not always constitute an 'imagined community' because "the idea of nationalism is complex and negotiable" and that "there are limits to generalisations about nationalism: it is a relative and situational phenomenon, each case being associated with particular places and times" (*ibid.*: 2-3). Nationalism can also potentially (and unsurprisingly) lead, therefore, to what Gilroy (1999) has called 'ethnic absolutism' or extreme forms of nationalism and purist constructions of 'identity' that can be seen behind tragic processes such as ethnic cleansing. Such violence and oppression can clearly not simply be relegated to non-Western 'others'. As Wimmer and Glick-Schiller (2002: 307) remind us:

*what we nowadays call ethnic cleansing or ethnocide, and observe with disgust in the 'ever troublesome Balkans' or in 'tribalistic Africa', have been constants of the European history of nation building and state formation, from the expulsion of the gypsies under Henry VIII or of Muslims and Jews under Ferdinand and Isabella to Ptolemy's night in France or the 'people exchange' (as it was called euphemistically) after the Treaty of Lausanne between Turkey and Greece.*

For the study of those in diaspora, constructions and notions of 'national identity' and nationalism are crucial issues because they often highlight what is simplistic about general theories surrounding nationalism outlined at the beginning of this section. As the supposed advent of globalisation and mass migration appear to be changing the accepted state of affairs, some have argued that a better understanding of the 'new geography of globalisation' is needed. This is so that the complex relations between local and global, as well as 'identity' and place can be critically interrogated (Marden 1997). At the same time though, we need to understand concepts and processes such as nationalism, 'national identity' and territorialisation (or attachment to a defined territory or



homeland) because diasporic populations in exile, such as Palestinians are often seen as trying to ‘achieve’ them.

For diasporic peoples who are displaced, a homeland is usually perceived as crucial, because it supposedly acts as stronghold in a world of flux and is a starting point for definitions of ‘identity’ and origin. In the absence of a concrete nation-state, it is often seen as the symbolic glue that holds people together. At the same time, this can also be a political project, because it is assumed that it is also the starting point for the creation and maintenance of ‘national identity’, which will lead to nationalism and the ‘nation’, both of which are necessary prerequisites to constructions of ‘unity’, ‘solidarity’ and eventual statehood. As a construction, the homeland is open to interpretation and at the same time, it is open to manipulation by those in power who are creating official ideologies and discourses that are then disseminated. This may be similar to the way in which those in power use state nationalism to suit their own agendas (Armstrong 1998, citing Hobsbawm 1983/1992; 1990).

A ‘shared consciousness’ and shared history is perceived as being needed in order to bind and unite people. In the process, ‘invented traditions’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), as well as ‘collective memories’ (Said 2000) may be used. This is because the past is seen as crucial to the present: “appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present” (Said 1994: 1). These appeals often become embedded as history as the linear and irrefutable truth and disguise the fact that history is relative, subjective and open to different interpretations. As Shapiro (2000: 80) notes: “the symbolic maintenance of the nation-state requires a management of historical narratives as well as territorial space”. Groups or leaders can appropriate and propagate such a view of history in order to gain power and/or unite people. As a result, certain historical events and representations are favoured over others, which may be ignored (see, for example, Allan and Thompson 1999, on the time-space of ‘national’ memory and Nuttall and Coetzee 1998, on the making of memory in South Africa). Although a detailed analysis of such issues is beyond the scope of this thesis, they are important to keep in mind.

Nationalistic and unifying aspirations and sentiments may be understandable for those without access to state-based political rights or who



have been subject to occupation, discrimination or marginalisation. As outlined above, constructing nationalism or national identities may be perceived as a legitimate act, precisely because it is seen in practice in host states as a legitimate basis for nation-states and the citizenship that comes with it. Many argue that the nation-state remains important (Triandafyllidou 1998, Marden 1997) as it is perceived as the main way in which people can obtain rights. As Ong (1999:15) points out: “the nation-state...continues to define, discipline, control and regulate all kinds of populations whether in movement or in residence.” This is also why the state, nationalism and national identity have many opponents. Verdery (1994, quoted in Robins and Aksoy 2001: 708), succinctly summarises such concerns:

*the kind of self-consistent person who “has” an “identity” is a product of a specific historical process: the process of modern nation-state formation... ‘identities’ are crucial tags by which state-makers keep track of their subjects: one cannot keep track of people who are one thing at one point and another thing at another.*

Such sentiments and the changing relationships between individuals, groups and the state as a result of migration and globalisation have led to theorisations of the decoupling of citizenship and ‘identity’ (Isin and Wood 1999), the decline of the nation-state (Kearney 1999) and ‘post-national membership’ (Soysal 1994; 2000). ‘National identity’ is problematic and contested and it is used throughout this thesis to denote that Palestinians in diaspora construct notions of collective belonging and attachment that may be exclusive or arbitrary. However, the term ‘shared consciousness’ may be seen as a more apt description because it takes into account that feelings of belonging and attachment can be fluid, multiple, ambivalent as well as collective. It is important to interrogate how Palestinians are constructing ‘shared consciousness’. In order to do this, we need to understand how Palestinians and those in diaspora operate as groups, as self-named communities whilst they negotiate similarities and differences amongst themselves. This allows us to explore the important issues of social, cultural and political representations, which can subsequently help explain activism and the advocacy of the Palestinian cause.



### **Debating ‘unities’: tensions and representations**

Robins and Aksoy (2001) dismiss the use of the notion of ‘imagined community’ to describe the experiences of Turkish Cypriots in London. Instead, they focus on a form of individualism that they have borrowed from Anthony Cohen, which seeks to “elicit and describe the thoughts and sentiments of individuals which we otherwise gloss over in the generalisations we derive from collective social categories” (Robins and Aksoy 2001: 688, citing Cohen 1994). Such a pin-pointing and elevation of the individual could be seen as necessary in order to capture the diversity and complexity of human existence but ignores how people may perceive themselves as sharing feelings of belonging and attachment/detachment. It may be true that categories such as ‘community’ are generalising but research still needs to be carried out on the processes of communal (as well as individual) relations. Only then can we begin to understand how people begin and continue to see themselves as part of groups, collectives, societies and countries, however homogenising such spaces and unities may be. It is individuals who are thinking and acting within groups and by looking at individuals in relation to each other as well as time and space, we may be able to trace power inequalities and define issues that may marginalise and exclude people. Here, one is reminded of the debates within postmodernism, between increasing fragmentation and individualisation and the ability of people to put differences aside and construct unities for political purposes. Both appear to be salient and occurring at the same time.

The naming of groups as ‘Palestinian’ or ‘Turkish Cypriot’ and so forth recognises the implicit tendency for researchers and those in diaspora to define and essentialise. Such labels, which unfortunately become associated with distinct cultures and traditions, have to be accepted but also eventually interrogated. Particularly for those in diaspora, the construction of themselves as similar (and being able to potentially overcome differences) can often be seen as empowering and desirable (for example, see Valins 2003 on the ‘stubborn identities’ of ultra orthodox Jews in Manchester) but can also be marginalising. Group ‘identity’ politics and activism (and associated overlooking of differences) are often perceived as necessary within diasporas who have messages or causes they would like to see addressed by various actors and



institutions. At the same time, such group 'solidarities' risk homogenising differences and can be potentially exclusionary for those who fall outside certain 'idealised' ways of being and acting. The same is equally true for constructions of 'national identity'; indeed the complex issues of similarities and differences and constructions of 'them' and 'us' are endemic to all populations living together and are often very hard to resolve. Such themes are crucial for those in diaspora as they are engaged in a continuous struggle in terms of how to represent themselves and how they are being represented to others, as well as how to deal with differences that come up, in a way that does not jeopardise their cause.

It has been established that it is often seen as necessary for groups of people to come together and agree on certain issues, as this is the way that they can get their messages across. This is where the notion of 'community' is seen as useful. It is viewed as a form of collective belonging, within which the group and individuals' identities are negotiated, constructed and represented. It is important to remember that "it is through the active construction of representations of 'the community' that members have a sense of commonality, shared purpose, 'interest' and so on" (Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins 2002: 289). This means "representations of collective identity are anything but neutral for they are bound up with recruiting support for particular political strategies" (*ibid.*). Communities can create imagined homogenous spaces, in which there are conflicting identities and tensions, both within and between them (Valentine 2001: 136) and the utopian ideal of local communities has been criticised for this emphasis on unity over difference (Young 1990). They are not necessarily anti-assimilationist, free of "ideologies of purity" (Clifford 1997: 251) or nationalist projects. However, the notion of 'community' itself is contested and open to varying interpretations (Delanty 2003). Senses of community can also be ambivalent and uncertain (Radcliffe 1999: 37). Goldring (1999: 167-68) for instance, argues that the idea of community is about shared history and identity and "mutually intelligible meanings" and that for "meaning to be contested (within a community), there must be some degree of intelligibility within which to struggle over meaning".

To create 'shared consciousness' and 'unity', diasporic identities are seen as being constructed and negotiated collectively on the basis of selected,



potentially idealised ‘norms’ of behaviour or unifying causes. At the same time, it is important to remember that:

*transnational migrants forge their sense of identity and their community, not out of a loss or mere replication, but as something that is at once new and familiar – a bricolage constituted of cultural elements from both the homeland and the receiving nation.*

(Kivisto 2001: 568)

Their identities may, therefore, be perceived as ‘in-between’ as well as strategic. For Kennedy and Roudometof (2001: 9, 17), “communities are units of belonging whose members perceive that they share moral, aesthetic/expressive or cognitive meanings, thereby gaining a sense of personal as well as group identity” and although this can put up boundaries between who is seen as a member and who is not, “communities...are consciously constructed and continuously reinvented”. Thus, the notion of ‘community’ can “become a collectivity which is actively struggled over rather than passively received” (Dwyer 1999: 54) and where “communities are imagined contingently and constructed through debate, dialogue and are fluid and changing” (*ibid.*). As Hall (1999: 303, 302) points out: “identities are not an essence but a positioning”. Hence, there is always a “politics of position” which “far from being externally fixed in some essentialised past...are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power”. However, in the process, people may essentialise their ‘imagined communities’ in order to create change. Werbner (1997: 248) argues for “self-essentialising as a mode of reflexive imagining” that is “constitutive of self and subjectivity”, which can create solidarities that are empowering and resistant without being racist or xenophobic and that are negotiated and performed in private and public diasporic spaces, often hidden from view. Alleyne (2002: 609) also stresses that: “identities based in ethnic communities have often proved to be politically useful, to provide a sense of solidarity in the face of political and social exclusion”.

On the one hand, fragmented identities of difference and diversity in the postmodern sense are important. On the other hand, the ability of people within



groups to hold multiple and segmented identities and engage in a 'politics of sameness' and 'difference' (Nagel 2002), or to position themselves differentially over time and space, is also significant. This does not mean necessarily that people are homogenising into some essential 'identity' or 'pure' nationalism, but that personal differences in opinion and perception may be put aside at certain moments and spaces in order to come together for specific socio-political reasons. In the process, different times and spaces are brought together, forcing us to re-think how people who may be very different can come together because of similarities that are constructed and maintained globally, transgressing borders. It may mean, however, that certain aspects of a culture are stressed or highlighted as being ideal or unique to that group of people, thereby representing or displaying such attributes as 'authentic', as a way to preserve a feeling of cultural uniqueness, or feelings of belonging. This stresses the importance of the "situational nature of identity construction" which leads to "negotiation strategies" that cannot be ignored (Matthews 2002: 77-8). As Lindholm Schulz (2003: 204) points out, people 'pick and choose' their identities. Understanding and examining such positionings and strategies can lead to the (always partial) uncovering of power inequalities, as well as the positive and negative aspects within diasporic groups that can have a large impact on people's lives. This could help explain how people actually deal with being themselves as dynamic, positioned and situated individuals as well as being part of a wider group and having to ascribe to a certain acceptable and definable 'identity'. The themes at the heart of this discussion seem to be the representation and negotiation of similarities and differences on an individual as well as collective basis, which are key components of any dialogue on group and society dynamics. The core issue of such debates appears to be a disjuncture between those who believe or assume there are distinct 'primordial' cultures to which people can relate (Cohen 1999) and, therefore, belong (hence the use of notions such as multiculturalism) and more postmodern ideas on hybridity and identities as constantly in-the-making and situated over time and space.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Such postmodern and poststructuralist ideas do not seem to have had an impact on policy-making, because if taken to their natural conclusion can potentially lead to fragmentation and disunity, to which there are no easy solutions. In addition, as Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002: 326) note: "the task is to determine what reductions of complexity will make best sense of the



For those in diaspora, the search for belonging and shared ‘community’ attachments may be difficult but also even more salient, as they may be more prone to feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. Constructing a ‘national identity’ or strategic ‘ways to be/act’ may be perceived as a solution or as desirable, in order to unite a disparate and fragmenting group. For diasporic, migrant and refugee populations, such issues can be particularly acute as they may not have the luxury of their own country to cushion them and they may, therefore, not take for granted the easy assumptions afforded to those who were born and raised in one place. Not only do they have to deal with the complexities of local-global interconnections, they often have to actively define and defend who they are and where they belong. This is why they are at the cutting edge of contesting the relationships between ‘community’, territory, citizenship and ‘identity’. However, such terms are problematic and contested and we should be wary of their homogenising potential. It is important to stress again that analysing diasporic and transnational migrant “social fields and networks as communities tends to reify and essentialise these communities” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 324). At the same time, group, collective and shared dynamics, attachments and consciousness can be seen as constantly being bound and unbound, or engaged in “an unending process of tying and loosening” (Shapiro 2000: 96, citing Nancy 1991).

A person can be visualised as transgressing arbitrary ‘identity’ boundaries for empowerment and resistance purposes, but at the same time, the connections, compromises, political affiliations and strategic essentialisms that may have to occur (and that are not necessarily in the interest of everyone who is supposed to be represented) have to be appreciated. The difficult question is, however, how to ensure people are being represented politically in ways that they not only agree with, but that allow them both the potential to participate and secure what they feel are their basic needs. This is relevant to people with or without formal citizenship. This is especially important for people within diasporic groups because the connections and cohesions with each other and the host country’s institutions and cultures may be particularly tenuous and

---

contemporary world and which ones are leaving out too many tones and voices, transforming them into what model builders call ‘noise’”.



complicated. They may also want entitlements in more than one country and see citizenship as a survival strategy to secure whatever rights they can.

### **Citizenship and political participation**

Citizenship is a contested and complicated notion (Faulks 2000), one that constitutes a dynamic performance of identities (Joseph 1999). It involves a set of practices and processes that allow individuals to construct, negotiate and position themselves spatially and temporally for strategic and legitimising purposes. It constitutes both a theoretical concept and a very real part (both positive and negative) of people's lives, especially for migrants and those in diaspora. It encourages 'national identity' definitions and validations based on the possession of documents such as a passport that allow official belonging to a country. Therefore, it is inclusive as well as exclusive. Citizenship is increasingly being seen as in need of critical reappraisal in order to make it relevant to the needs of people today, such as women (Lister 1997, McEwan 2005, Yuval-Davis 1997) and migrants (Croucher 2004; Benhabib 2004) who are being potentially excluded or marginalised. The changing relationships between citizenship, identities, perceptions and realities of hybridity, belonging, politicisation and potential political activism are crucial issues for those in diaspora.

It is important to note the links between citizenship, nationalism and 'national identity' in that "who gets defined as a 'true' citizen within the city-state or nation-state depends in part on who carries with them what is deemed to be the correct baggage of history, ethnicity, language and religion" (Painter and Philo 1995: 112). Therefore, citizenship is often seen as prescriptive, forcing citizens to subscribe to certain stereotypical and 'ideal' ways. As Gupta argues (1997: 193) "Citizenship ought to be theorised as one of the multiple subject positions occupied by members of diversely spatialized, partially overlapping or nonoverlapping collectivities." It is important to consider and re-conceptualise citizenship as a set of practices, experiences and meanings created by individuals who are members of multiple communities as well as by groups (Staeheli 2002). Citizenship needs to be thought of as a means for inclusion and participation in society, but at the same time, it has to be a notion that is critical, contested and



dynamic. The interrogation of the relationships between citizenship, belonging and 'identity' may also illustrate how, for migrants and those in diaspora, a decoupling of citizenship and 'identity' may be occurring (Isin and Wood 1999).

It could be argued that the central importance of politicisation, particularly for those without formal citizenship, is its capacity to allow people to have a voice with which to potentially claim rights in order to better their lives and to participate politically. For migrants and those in diaspora who are not citizens, citizenship is still a reality that affects them in myriad ways. Itzigsohn (2000: 1146) claims that "transnational politics have opened spaces for participation of previously marginalized groups" and that "we are witnessing the emergence of new forms of political action and citizenship that transcend the territorial and political boundaries of states" (*ibid.*: 1127). This may be true for those with formal citizenship status but political participation through informal political spaces outside the realm of the nation-state also needs to be explored. The ways in which formal citizenship status (or the lack of) can influence the everyday lives, realities and experiences of those in diaspora with complex residency and legal status and difficult relations to the state in ways that are often not straightforward or necessarily emancipatory need to be taken into account. People are involved and placed in these unofficial spaces differently. For example, as power struggles within groups are played out, those who need the most help, such as vulnerable illegal immigrants or domestic workers may not benefit (Kofman 1995) and are excluded or marginalised further.

Political participation analysed in relation only to citizens may be seen as exclusive because a large number of people within a state may be left out because of undocumented or non-citizenship status. As political participation is normally associated with formal citizenship status, such people may not be seen as politically active or politicised. However, this is not always the case and the informal political spaces they may be involved in need to be explored. Migrants and those in diaspora may dip into and use different strategies at different times and different spaces in order to better or deal with their lives, drawing on as many resources as possible and using the cross-border connections they have available to them.



## Diasporic Spaces

Diasporic spaces need to be theorised and researched in depth because it is through these formal and informal spaces that grounded and relational subjectivities are negotiated, individually and privately, but also publicly and collectively. These are spaces that are materially concrete as well as symbolic and metaphorical in the sense that the meanings that are constructed transgress the physicality of actual space. As Massey (1994: 168, 170-171) notes, space

*is the simultaneous co-existence of social interrelations at all geographical scales, from the intimacy of the household to the wide space of transglobal connections...a large component of identity of that place called home derived precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it.*

Here, the importance of the home as a diasporic space in motion and as inextricably “multidimensional, resonant and open to other spaces” is suggested (Wise 2000: 298). In addition, the relations between the physical and emotional elements of such diasporic spaces are crucial; the two cannot exist independently of each other. These spaces are always in the process of being positioned, situated and (dis)located by those involved within them. Therefore, if we are to see such spaces as fluid and interconnected, it may be useful to imagine space as having “neither an originary point to which we may return, nor an end point (telos) at which we will eventually arrive”. As result, “we are always in-between” (*ibid.*: 305). This is why diasporic spaces may also be seen as hybrid and ‘in-between’.

Brah (1996: 180) usefully discusses the concept of ‘diaspora space’ which:

*marks the intersectionality of contemporary conditions of transmigration of people, capital, commodities and culture. It addresses the realm where economic, cultural and political effects of crossing/transgressing different ‘borders’ are experienced; where*



*contemporary forms of transcultural identities are constituted; and where belonging and otherness is appropriated and contested.*

Like diasporic identities, diasporic spaces are often seen as being able to transgress borders. They may be able to bring different countries or locations together in ways that are significant and empowering for those in diaspora, allowing them to potentially be involved in political activities. It is in diasporic spaces where feelings of belonging and politicisation are potentially defined and debated and where perceptions of resistance, hope and agency can arise. The symbolic importance of diasporic spaces cannot be ignored, as it is within and a result of such material spaces that powerful senses of shared experience, persecution, injustice and suffering may be articulated. The material and the immaterial are, therefore, inextricably tied. However, diasporic spaces are also contested as they are not necessarily open to everyone and people are placed within them in very different, uneven ways and in the process, some may feel excluded.

The idea of diasporic spaces, as used within this research, can allow us to think about people's spatial and temporal negotiations, constructions, feelings and realities of political advocacy, activism, inclusion, exclusion and agency. The creation of diasporic spaces or spaces as a result of cross-border connections and 'space-shrinking' technologies, in which people can informally negotiate themselves as hybrid and strategic political, cultural and social beings are important because they enable such people to contest the exclusionary relationships between citizenship and political action, as well as 'identity'. Such spaces also pave the way for the continued undermining of the hegemony and control of nation-states and may allow people to come together, feel politicised and discuss their needs and rights. At the same time, there need to be regulations and legal systems in place and it is the nation-state that currently provides this. Although notions such as a 'world government' based on 'universal rights', and 'post-national membership' (Soysal 1994; 2000) have been put forward, they seem a long way off at present. Itzigsohn (2000: 1147) asserts that "political transnationalism ...does not constitute a challenge to the structures of power and the social hierarchies that existed before". Despite this,



understanding the processes of political participation that may take place within host countries but depend on cross-border, transnational and diasporic relations is a step towards the re-thinking of the role of the nation-state in its current form and the exclusions it promotes and allows.

### **Geography, politics and diaspora**

Human geography is often perceived as having a key role to play in research on migrants, those in diaspora and on transnationalism. As Mitchell (1997a: 110) stresses:

*Through geographically informed research and theoretically nuanced understandings of difference and alterity, the difficult questions related to borders and identities will be forced to the surface even if they remain partially unanswered and unanswerable.*

Geographers are concerned with understanding and grounding time-space interactions. In particular, human geographers have an important role to play in exploring the relations between such interactions at varying scales and levels. They have thus made significant contributions to the analysis of space, power and politics. As Thrift (2000: 274) notes: “space...is the stuff of power”. Massey (1993; 1994; 1999) has extensively deliberated on the importance and intricacies of spatial processes, politics and power. In a similar vein, Amin (2004) proposes a new relational politics of place and space in which political actions are not interpreted merely in local, territorial or regional terms. The influences that affect spatial politics are seen as more open-ended than bounded and are perceived to be juxtaposed between varying scales of proximity and distance. Hence, political actions can also be understood as negotiations between the situated and the transnational/global. Therefore, space is an important component of political activism, a crucial consideration within this research. As McEwan (2000: 646) stresses, in her work on women and citizenship in South Africa, democratisation:



*requires the creation of spaces (metaphorical and material) for participation, where emphasis is placed on the ability of people to participate and mould the politics that shape their everyday lives.*

Human geographers are well equipped, theoretically and practically, to carry out research that not only transgresses borders, but that is also able to pull together the political, social, cultural and economic aspects of diasporic life. In this way, not only can the concepts of hybridity and bricolage be related to people's lives, but also the connections between people and places can be traced and placed "in the context of growing global uncertainty, xenophobia and racism" (McEwan 2004). In this way, it will be possible to appreciate the similarities and differences that occur between those in diaspora in terms of their constructions and negotiations of 'identity', citizenship and economic statuses as well as their political activities and how these are played out through local-global interactions. This allows a better understanding of how certain groups are placed in both disadvantaged (such as refugees or those in exile) and advantaged positions (such as elites) as well as the "unromanticized and noncelebratory experience of space-time in a transnational population" (Bailey *et al.* 2002: 141).

### **Combining geographical, postcolonial and diasporic perspectives**

Diasporic and postcolonial perspectives remind us that hybridity does not necessarily equate to resistance and empowerment (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Jacobs 1996: 15), is not to be celebrated just yet (Mitchell 1997b; Pratt 1999; Anthias 2001) and that detailed contextual and historicized research is vital so that "political implications of complex, untidy, differentiated and ambiguous local stories" (Nash 2002: 228) are explored. One could argue, however, that the reason hybridity has been criticised in such ways is because of our continued dependence on nation-states, whose present form may limit hybrid connections and spaces because of the presence of distinct and (over) protective borders, increasingly defining who rightfully belongs (Croucher 2004).

The use of the word 'Palestinian-ness' throughout this thesis captures the sense of identities in-the-making, as fractured and fluid but also as strategic and associated with shared visions of what it means to be Palestinian. At the same



time, it stresses an idea central to this research, that of diasporas as processes and in-the-making. Terms or categories of classification such as 'identity', 'nationalism' and even 'transnationalism' appear to be used far too easily (Robins and Aksoy 2001) and are all connected to the emergence and power or influence of nation-states. Yet when conducting research on diasporas these terms are very hard to avoid. The use of the notions of diaspora and 'Palestinian-ness' is then perhaps to interrogate and problematise such terms. Even though diasporas may have been imagined as homogenised entities with neatly defined 'cultures' attached, this research hopes to move beyond such simplistic analyses. In order to do this, the political, social and cultural need to be thought of, explored and understood together, which may be hard to do, particularly with the current configuration of distinct disciplines that study diasporas.

Human geographical research should be not only critical, but also practical and relevant to the people involved. The value of combining human geographical, diasporic and postcolonial perspectives is based on the premise that the latter two are engaged in and committed to transgressing symbolic and physical boundaries and human geography enables the necessary concrete research on people's lives to be carried out. The importance of postcolonial and diasporic perspectives is this imminent and latent possibility of transgressing material and immaterial borders. As stressed earlier, "we need to think beyond previous paradigms of transnationalism, of diaspora as dispersed ethnic, religious or national communities" (Werbner 1998: 12). Notions of hybridity, diaspora and postcolonial theories all have the potential to be used together to act as a useful framework to think beyond simplistic notions of 'identity' and belonging. Each set of theories and debates adds layers of richness and depth of understanding to diasporic lives, actions, experiences and emotions. At the same time, such combined and flexible use of different approaches allows exploration into the processes that affect perceptions of unities and disunities as well as realities of inclusions and exclusions for those in diaspora. The location of this research in Athens also enables the vital 'opening up' of sites of diasporic existence and engagement beyond the so-called recognised 'global cities' such as London, illustrating that there are hybrid and diasporic populations 'in the margins' with alternative viewpoints and realities.



The strength of a human geographical approach is the ability to critically link different aspects of people's lives and at the same time, recognise the complexity of the times and spaces that influence people's identities and political actions. As Blunt (2005: 10) notes: "while geography is clearly central to understanding diaspora both in theory and practice, ideas about diaspora also raise questions about space and place". If we are to truly move beyond the nation-state conceptually or make it more relevant to the contemporary world in which we live, perhaps we should try not to use terms that are so intimately connected to the nation-state. Even the word 'diaspora' could be criticised for its categorizing tendencies and links to naturalising and encouraging territory-'identity' associations and linkages. At the moment, however, and for the purposes of this research, I will retain 'diaspora' as a way to think about Palestinians as a group as well as individually. Their feelings, experiences and actions are 'on the move' (Lindholm Schulz 2003) but are also constantly being 'fixed' and 'unfixed' as they make sense of, negotiate and position themselves and their lives in Athens, between 'here' and 'there'. It is important to remember when analysing 'here' (Greece) and 'there' (Palestine) that Greece is a country and Palestine is not and that associations Palestinians have with both are relational.<sup>3</sup> Lives of movement also require stasis, spaces that are constructed as stable or fixed, as home, the homeland, a house and so forth with which to position oneself and feel security. The nation-state has come to take on this role of provider of imagined stability and security. Even though those in diaspora may crave such defined spaces to 'hold' them, the homeland as a 'natural' space to belong to, live in and form a state in are political constructions that exploit feelings of insecurity in a world of movement and defined nation-states in which those in diaspora may be made to feel unwelcome or different.

It is very important to consider how hybrid and diasporic lives, identities and political actions are shaped by and fit into power relations. It is clearly not enough to expound generally about the hybrid and transgressive qualities of these issues in a purely theoretical manner. Theory needs to be extended and

---

<sup>3</sup> By this, I mean that Palestinians have to continuously place themselves within the dynamic contexts of 'Greek-ness', Greek surroundings, Palestine as well as the Middle East and beyond. Palestine, as will be seen in Chapter Five, is a problematic notion in itself. I use the term Palestine as opposed to the Occupied Territories, because most Palestinian participants did.



linked to material geographical research. If identities are to be seen as fluid, shifting and open-ended, 'identity' as a potentially homogenising categories of belonging, citizenship and political action needs to be critically interrogated. The potential for political and socio-economic change within human lives arises as a result of the creation of spaces that are able to sit within and transgress boundaries, where there are ever new and different ways to be included in the political practices and activities that have the potential to advocate change. In the process, therefore, it is vital to think of identities as non-essentialist and relational constructions and negotiations that are, at the same time, grounded and historicized. We need to ask how constructing differences and similarities can be done in a positive manner, so that tolerance, compromise and negotiation become ways of obtaining rights, where 'them' and 'us' and 'here' and 'there' are recognised as situational, sliding and interconnected spatially and temporally. It is important to carry out grounded qualitative geographical research in order to deconstruct and analyse the complex and merging times and spaces, in which the social, cultural and political come together within lives, experiences, emotions and actions. In this way, perceptions of home, belonging, citizenship, political actions and cross-border connections can be explored in ways that are meaningful and relevant to people, as individuals and as collectives, within and between groups.



### **Methodologies**

This chapter provides a detailed outline of the qualitative methodologies employed in this research, which was carried out over a period of nine months in 2003-4. It highlights the research questions and focuses on the realities and practicalities of the research design and process, as well as ethics, power relations, positionality and representation. In addition, it includes a discussion of the importance of such issues within qualitative research in general. It goes on to analyse the use of interviews and ethnography as research methods and the difficulties posed by language during research of this nature.

#### **Research Questions**

Before discussing the methodologies employed, it is important to provide clear statements on the research questions this thesis is attempting to examine. They are, as follows:

1. To explore how Palestinians in Athens negotiate and construct diasporic identities, as well as notions of home, the 'homeland' (both real and imagined), belonging and citizenship and the relationships between them. In order to do this, the research interrogates the salience of the notions of 'hybridity' and 'transnationalism' as well as postcolonial theories in the understanding of the material lives and symbolic identities of the Palestinian diaspora. It examines the political and cultural effects of being displaced and living in exile; it also explores the importance of attachments and cross-border connections to Palestine/Middle East to Palestinian lives and identities in Athens in order to gain an appreciation of the role of territorially based belonging.
2. To appreciate the dynamic spatial and temporal elements of this constant positioning, ambivalence and living 'in-between', both 'here' and 'there', as well as the strategic and politicised maintenance of 'unity' and 'shared consciousness'



as ways of advocating the Palestinian cause. In examining these issues, the research explores what appear to be interrelated political, social and cultural elements of Palestinian identities and actions.

3. To critique notions of diaspora as an overly unified ethnic totality through understanding the inherent power relations, constraints and tensions (both institutional and socio-economic), and the consequent realities of dealing with differences, inclusions, exclusions and representation within the Palestinian diaspora in Athens. The research demonstrates that diasporic lives, emotions, identities and actions can perhaps be both strategic and ambivalent, united and disunited and in the process add to debates on the complex nature of diasporic identities, politicisation and advocacy and the relationships between them.

4. To investigate the potential hybridity and lived experiences of symbolic and material diasporic spaces. The research explores how and why Palestinians establish and are involved in overlapping public and private, formal and informal spaces. It also investigates the implications of this for re-thinking citizenship, examining potential political agency and action, both individually and collectively, as well as exploring how Palestinians in Athens may feel included, excluded, marginalised, empowered or resistant as a result.

5. To demonstrate how researching diasporic identities, spaces and politics can act as a framework for understanding the lives of other diasporic peoples within Athens, the wider contexts of Europe and the rest of the world, as well as to contribute to ongoing research on migrants and the themes of citizenship, identity and politicisation.

### **Research design: practicalities of implementation**

Qualitative research methods were deemed the best way to explore the research questions. In-depth discussions with respondents formed the main bulk of the research, although more semi-structured interviews with officials were also carried out. Local documents and material were also examined to provide the necessary contextual information needed. The research was originally designed



to be carried out in two phases. The first phase of research was supposed to be carried out between May 2003 and September 2003 and the second from September 2003 to March 2004 but in reality the two periods merged. It was important, therefore, that the research process was a flexible and iterative one, so that it was able to deal with such changes that occurred. The first phase endeavoured to extend the initial contacts made with Palestinians during MSc research, through the process of snowballing. It was important to understand the background of the immigration policies that may have influenced or affected the Palestinian diaspora in Athens even though this research is not primarily concerned with analysing such policies. Although it was thought that an attempt would be made to bring together the top-down policy aspects of migration in Greece and bottom-up experiences and perceptions of Palestinian migrants, in reality, the Palestinians interviewed did not seem overly affected by the policies. Despite this, Greek immigration policy and laws were examined via more semi-structured interviews with officials and academics.

Major sources of information were local newspaper articles, which contained invaluable facts, debates and viewpoints on immigration policies and migrants' problems with them. A conference on migrant rights, entitled 'Migrants as workers or human beings?' was also attended in February 2004. This provided a useful overview of the key issues affecting migrants in Athens and was interesting as it was attended by academics, policy-makers and migrants, who were all able to discuss the issues. Key non-governmental organisations in Greece, such as the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) and the network for the Support of Immigrants and Refugees (DYMP) were contacted in order to try and elicit more information on the Palestinian diaspora but such attempts proved futile on the whole. The UNHCR provided some statistics, which have been included in Chapter One.

Two types of interview comprised the main research method. To understand the more technical policy and legal debates, a series of semi-structured interviews were carried out with Greek academics working on issues of immigration such as Dr Marina Petronoti at EKKE (The National Centre for Social Research) and Dr Rossetos Fakiolas at Panteio University, Athens. An official from the Aliens department (that deals with immigrant and asylum



applications) was also interviewed and email communication occurred with UNHCR representatives in Athens. These were one-off interviews with set questions arranged into themes, although they were flexible, so that respondents were able to discuss certain issues if they wished to. This seemed to be the best way of finding out necessary background information. However, it must be stressed that the majority of more formal information on the Palestinian diaspora in Athens had to come from the embassy and leaders of Unions as there did not appear to be a great deal of data on the Palestinian diaspora in Athens.

The main bulk of the research involved the use of informal, unstructured interviews, where I met participants on as many occasions as possible. Such interviews were more 'conversational' in manner (Kitchin and Tate 2000: 214) and allowed the development of 'conversational partnerships' (Rubin and Rubin 1995). These enabled the participant to meander more freely through topics of interest and to initiate discussions. Fifty-four respondents of diverse backgrounds were interviewed using such methods, of which twenty-two were women and thirty-two were men. Appendix One lists all the respondents involved in this research and provides information on their gender, occupation, age, place of origin and residence time in Athens, as well as the time, date and place of interview and the language used.

Prior research suggests that the majority of Palestinians in Athens appear to be first generation, between twenty and forty years of age and male (Mavroudi 2002). Therefore, this was reflected in the number of people interviewed who lie in this age range. The children of Palestinians who marry Palestinians together with Greek-Palestinian children, whose parents are both Greek and Palestinian, give rise to an important second generation. As this generation is in its infancy in Athens, generally speaking, this research does not specifically focus on it. However, some interviews with second-generation Palestinians were carried out in order to acknowledge its presence and to raise questions and issues for future research on the Palestinian diaspora as well as to begin to understand inter-generational differences. Although gender was not a factor that was targeted in particular, an attempt was made initially to interview an equal amount of men and women but this was not possible and more men than women were located. This may have been due to both the demographics of the Palestinian diaspora in



Athens and gatekeepers involved. The number of men and women finally spoken to reflected suggestions by contacts and not necessarily my wishes; I was happy and grateful to listen to whoever had the time to participate. The unequal number of men and women was not seen as problematic for the purposes of this research, which was not aimed at being a representative survey of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens. The general aim was to speak to as wide a cross-section and as many members of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens as possible, in order to appreciate their diversity, differences and similarities.

The key gatekeepers for locating participants were Palestinians who attended the Parikia (the Palestinian 'community' house) as well as the Palestinian embassy. To this end, I spoke to illegal immigrants, officially recognised refugees, wealthier more educated employees of foreign-owned companies and teachers, Palestinians who were unemployed or working in manual and unskilled labour, as well as businesspeople who were self-employed. I tried to meet Palestinians who were and were not involved in the Parikia, embassy and Unions and who had differing political affiliations. However, political attachments or support of particular political groups was often hard to ascertain and did not appear to be something many Palestinians were particularly keen to share with me in any depth. In this way, I have hopefully been able to gain a deep understanding of the diversity of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens. Although I would have liked to be able to meet all participants on numerous occasions, it was not always possible to meet up again because of participant time and family constraints. I interviewed a senior official in the Palestinian embassy on several occasions, the representative of the PLO in Greece, as well as two Greek-Palestinians who are involved in Greek politics, one in his capacity as the Deputy Mayor of an Athenian municipality and another during his campaign to become an MP for the PASOK political party at the general elections held in 2004. These interviews were more semi-structured in nature.

Having located key contacts and assessed the practicality and suitability of the proposed interviews as research methods, the second phase involved carrying out in-depth, loosely structured interviews. This was the most difficult part of the research and necessitated spending longer periods of time with respondents. All interviews took place wherever respondents felt was suitable. The majority of the



took place in participants' homes, as this was felt by participants and the researcher to be the ideal location to discuss the issues central to this research. Thirty-eight of the interviews were carried out in English; the rest were carried out in Greek.<sup>1</sup> Over thirty interviews were taped and then transcribed and a detailed field diary was also kept, which enabled specific contextual notes to be written. Interviews and meetings that were not taped necessitated the writing of notes during and after the interview.

Interview questions were formulated to try to explore the research questions and themes. The first couple of questions were more general, aimed at 'placing' the respondent and finding out necessary background information. For example, they were asked under what circumstances they arrived in Athens, where they had lived before and how long they had resided in Greece. These questions often amounted to a brief oral history of their own as well as their family's lives, often from 1948 or the time of their dispersal and/or displacement to the present day. This part of the interview also aimed to uncover the main citizenship and residency statuses. The questions then proceeded to work through the main themes and areas of interest as outlined in the research questions above, starting with issues of home, 'identity' and belonging and then continuing with feelings of politicisation, political unity, advocacy and participation, and the spaces in which such activities may take place.

After transcription, the analysis of interviews began with a thorough reading of all the transcripts in tandem with the relevant pages of the research diary and field notes in order to gain an in-depth appreciation of the interviews as a whole and in relation to each other. A second reading of the transcripts was accompanied by the highlighting of general themes, of which there were three. The first was home, belonging and feelings of being Palestinian. The second was perceptions of politicisation and political unity, apathy and empowerment. The third encompassed citizenship, spaces of advocacy and material political actions. These broad themes were designed to fit into the proposed analytical chapters, of which three were originally envisaged. Therefore, during this second reading, a coding system was used with a number outlining the relevant chapter and theme as well as notes on the specific use of particular sections. For example, code

---

<sup>1</sup> The issues surrounding language are discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter.



number one might be used with a note to highlight that the section referred to important material on feelings of being Palestinian. This coding of themes relating to chapters proved very useful in the writing up of the research as the themes already correlated with empirical chapters. In reality, each chapter went through numerous transformations in terms of what material it would cover as many of the issues explored in this research are interrelated. Therefore, great care had to be taken to ensure that each theme was dealt with in detail on its own but also remained connected to other themes throughout the other analytical chapters.

Testimonies included in the analytical chapters were often long. Ethical considerations for the research process to be as transparent as possible and for the voices of participants to be heard meant that it was important to include as much of what people said as possible (which are outlined below). However, in addition to this, the complexity and ambivalence of many of the themes and perceptions discussed necessitated the inclusion of long quotes and a series of appendices with lengthy testimonies. This helped illustrate participant thought processes, how they came to the conclusions they did, as well as researcher-respondent dynamics and knowledge production. Ideally, the material in the appendices would have been included in the main text as they were considered to contain important material that closely related to the discussion of certain key themes. However, word constraints and the potential disturbance to the flow of arguments necessitated the movement of longer testimonies into a series of appendices that are referred to in the main text.

The methodologies employed in this research were crucial as they were intimately involved in allowing the research questions and theoretical concerns to be taken into account. They needed to be able to allow the subtle nuances and ambivalences of Palestinian lives in Athens to be explored, allowing complex issues to be dealt with. A 'bottom-up' ethnographic approach is useful, as advocated, for example, by Wong (2002: 72), who promotes a "postcolonial epistemology of location" where "ethnography becomes a site where multiple voices are brought to light and negotiated". Ethnography is committed to 'deep' and rich understandings of people and cultures in ways that are sensitive, respectful and that recognise the inevitable partiality of knowledges and meanings. Ethnographers spend prolonged periods of time 'in the field' and there



has been a great deal written on this arbitrary distinction between the 'here' of the researcher's work and the 'there' of the field, whereby the idea that the two can be neatly and objectively separated has been criticized (see, for example, Professional Geographer Issue on Women in the Field 1994).

Although ethnographically based fieldwork can become very intensive for everyone involved, it has been extremely useful within this research because it has helped to understand the everyday lives and emotions of Palestinians in Athens and how these may have changed over time. Contemporary or so-called 'new' ethnography advocated by anthropologists such as Clifford and Marcus (1986), recognises that ethnographies are 'constructed narratives' that are neither fully representative nor objective and that they are "historically grounded and politically aware" (Banks 1998: 9). Such anthropologists have come a long way in acknowledging and critiquing the unethical and distinctly eurocentric representations of 'Others' that their earlier colleagues used (see, for example, Edwards 1992). Collections such as those by Okely and Callaway (1992), Ellis and Brochner (1996), and James *et al.* (1997) are acutely aware of this and are promoting new and more reflexive ethnographic research. Pink's (2001: 180) definition of ethnography is useful:

*rather than being a method for the collection of 'data', ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on the ethnographers own experiences. It does not claim to produce a 'truthful' account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced.*

Human geographers have also increasingly used and advocated ethnographic methodologies in a wide range of research projects (see, for example, Cook and Crang 1995; Chapters 10-12 in Limb and Dwyer 2001). In terms of researching those in diaspora, ethnography provides the researcher with a unique tool for understanding the more complex and difficult aspects of their



lives and feelings. Palestinians have been and still are largely 'on the move', displaced, often precariously and ambiguously caught between 'here' and 'there', the past and the present, memory and reality; research methods that allow such tensions to be explored are, therefore, extremely useful. Ethnographically inspired approaches, such as migrant stories (Lawson 2000, King *et al.* 1998), oral histories (Miles and Crush 1993) or 'transnational spatial ethnographies' (Mitchell 1997a) provide a much-needed alternative to more quantitative analyses of diasporic lives, especially when little or no information is available on them. This is especially the case in Greece, where up until very recently, migrant, especially women and refugee voices have been largely silent (Lazaridis 2000). Ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and repetitive informal interviews allow a much more open, trusting and transparent relationship to develop between researcher and participant.

Within this research, the use of repeated informal contact with certain participants as well as the attending of numerous social, political and political functions meant that it sometimes used ethnographic methods, such as participant observation. It has also used many of the ideas and theories behind ethnographic approaches, in terms of, for example, the production of knowledges, representation and ethics during the research process, which are outlined below. For example, several respondents were met on multiple occasions, either at their home, cafés or during events. I was also in contact with gatekeepers regularly and attended as many meetings at the Parikia as was possible (which took place every Saturday afternoon) as well as other cultural and political events associated with the Palestinian diaspora in Athens. For example, I was present at a Greek-Palestinian social, cultural and political event in December 2003. During the same month, I was also invited by some Palestinians to attend a political meeting with them. This was the launching a new far left Greek political party. I also accompanied a woman living in Athens illegally to various NGOs in the centre of Athens as she tried to obtain medical attention, in order to help deal with language issues. On another occasion, I repeatedly visited a Palestinian family living in Athens illegally as they experienced the daily difficulties of living in squalid conditions in one room.



It has to be noted that given the location of this research in a large city and the nature of the research, the opportunities to engage ‘in the field’ and in sustained, ‘deep’ ethnographic research were usually limited despite my best intentions. Rather than focus exclusively on a number of households, for example, and conduct much more in-depth ethnographic research, such as living with them, or visiting them every day for a period of time, this research was aimed at talking to as many Palestinians as possible. This was deemed especially important given the paucity of information on the Palestinian diaspora in Athens. Therefore, the sole use of ethnographic methods might not have been as effective, given the time-frame of the research.

Visual methods were also employed during some interviews. However, the instigation and use of such methods normally arose from participants themselves rather than the researcher and as a result were not used consistently but as and when the situation arose. For example, one respondent drew a map to help explain his family’s displacement and several commented on artwork in the form of paintings and embroidery in their homes as part of their discussion on their identities. Another respondent used a photo of her son dressed in a traditional kuffiyas to outline how proud she was to be Palestinian and how important it was for her son to feel the same way. Others also used books on Palestinians they had at home to help illustrate what they felt were key issues of the Palestinian diaspora and cause. Reading material such as leaflets and objects such as badges were sometimes also given to me apparently as a means to help highlight the Palestinian cause and to help in the research. For example, one of the participants gave me a t-shirt with the logo of a charity she had helped set up.

Despite the intermittent use of such visual and material culture methods, where they were used, they were extremely useful in helping to understand Palestinian identities. Such methods were actively considered in the planning stages of this research, as an important research method alongside oral communication as they were considered useful in the exploration of complex, difficult and potentially ambivalent notions such as home and belonging. In particular, it was intended that the methods of photo-elicitation and auto-photography were to be used during the interview process. During the actual implementation of the research, however, it became apparent that such visual



methods would be extremely difficult to carry out. The main reasons for this were the difficulties in arranging meetings with what were often extremely busy individuals and the fact that I did not feel confident enough as a result to ask respondents to get involved in such time-consuming methods. In particular, one of the gatekeepers actively discouraged the use of such methods for this reason. It was felt that it might limit the number of people who would be willing to be involved as it would involve meeting them on many occasions and would necessitate them finding time to carry out the tasks during busy schedules, which could have proved problematic for many potential participants. Therefore, as the aim of this research was to try and speak to as many Palestinians in Athens as possible, such methods were decided against. The sporadic use of some visual research methods, as outlined above, demonstrated the potential use and significance of such methods to research on diasporic and migrant identities, belonging and politicisation. Had more time been available, these would probably have been used and in any future research on the Palestinian diaspora, I would ensure that enough time was scheduled to carry out such important research methods.

### **Ethics, representation and positionality: issues and realities**

In the case of research on diasporas, detailed studies are needed to counterbalance perceptions of diasporas as distinct and homogenised or 'unified' entities and to allow their diversity to be taken into account. It is necessary, therefore, to couple theorisations on diaspora with grounded research on the materiality and everyday realities of those in diaspora. It is only as a result of such research that essentialising and arbitrary categories of 'identity', 'tradition', and 'nationalism' can be pulled apart. Such research does not negate the importance of forming feelings of 'shared consciousness', cultural traditions and belonging that undoubtedly exist. Rather, it forces us to consider how they have been constructed unevenly and dynamically through time and space as a result of complex power relations and inequalities and negotiations of similarities and differences. Therefore, the way in which the research has been conducted is crucial, in terms of ethics, positionality, reflexivity and representation. Many geographers have written candidly on these issues (see for example, McDowell



1992; Sidaway 1992; Madge 1993; Duncan and Sharp 1993; Limb and Dwyer 2001). Feminist geographers, in particular, have worked hard to understand their own positions as researchers and academics and the implications of this in terms of power relations, as well as how the personal and political aspects of research are interrelated (see, for example, McDowell 1992; Professional Geographer Issue on Women in the Field 1994; Laurie *et al.* 1999). Although the difficulties of doing this are acknowledged, (see Rose 1997, for example) there is strong consensus that such concerns must form a central tenet of any ethically aware and critically engaged research (Katz 1992, 1994; Ramirez 2000).

The salience of conducting research that is ethically aware must be stressed. This can enable a research process that is dynamic, reflexive, intent on interrogating power relations and that is historically as well as contextually aware. As Valentine (2001: 50) notes: “while ethical issues may seem routine or moral questions rather than anything that is intrinsic to the design of the research project, in practice they actually underpin what we do”. In addition, ethical awareness can help ensure the protection and well-being of participants with the use of anonymity and informed consent, ensuring that the production of knowledges occur fairly as well as sensitively and without harm, prejudice or discomfort to the participant. In addition, it has to be remembered that the researcher is a ‘positioned subject’ (Rosaldo 1989). Not only must the researcher’s position be recognised as situated and far from innocent or objective (Haraway 1988; Rose 1997) but the interpretation and representation of the participants’ voices will be partial and subjective, despite all efforts to decrease the power inequalities between researcher and researched.

Within this research, issues of ethics, positionality and representation were of utmost importance. To begin with, participants were approached very carefully, usually with the help of gatekeepers who were known to them and whom they trusted. Great care was taken to ensure participants did not feel obliged to take part in the research and that they could refuse if they wished. Although informed consent forms were not provided, the aims of the research project as well as the use and dissemination of data collected were all fully and clearly explained to respondents. Interviews were only taped with the permission of participants and their anonymity and confidentiality has been ensured with the



use of pseudonyms throughout. It was made clear to participants that they could refuse participation at any time during the interview process and their rights and privacy were taken into account at all times. As such, sustained efforts to ensure that respondents were always at ease and did not feel pressurised, exploited or mistreated took place. An example of this was the participants' choice of where and when they felt most comfortable with the interviews taking place. The research involved dealing with multiple sensitivities, including how respondents perceived me. It is interesting to note participants' reactions to me as a white, young, half Greek-half English (and not Palestinian or Arabic) researcher. To begin with, most Palestinians assumed I was a supporter of the Palestinian cause and people, or that I was at least sympathetic to their problems. This seemed to form a firm reason for them to talk to me. This was problematic for a number of reasons. Their assumption that I was on their 'side' made it hard for me to ask questions or discuss issues that may have appeared antagonistic. Although I was able on occasion to ask questions that may have been more difficult for them to answer (such as for example, on whether they thought suicide bombing could be justified), I had to be very careful how I asked these questions. They often took the form of 'Some people have criticized Palestinians for...What do you think of this?'

In addition to this, as the interviews were more like discussions or conversations, I often had to answer as many questions as I asked. This was especially the case when I spoke to people in their homes, which was seen as a social event and they were clearly trying to get to know me as well. This raises all sorts of issues for ethnographic research, as it is often impossible to remain an 'outsider' looking in and merely asking questions. In such two-way more discursive interviews, the researcher is required to open up and be honest about her intentions and her background. At the same time, however, the primary objective of meeting participants is to carry out research. Problems can arise when the researched and researcher form close relationships and have built up networks of trust. As participants become more trusting of the researcher, they tend to open up more and will often say things 'off the record'. These are often what the researcher feels are the most important parts of the research, especially within this research, where I was trying to understand the tensions, conflicts and



disunities within groups that outwardly want to appear united. Being allowed to use quotes made in private is often a matter of intense negotiation and can be very frustrating for all parties involved. As researchers, we appear to be torn at times, between protecting our participants and representing them in a manner that is both fair and that allows an in-depth portrayal of as many issues the research is dealing with as possible. Such issues were dealt with by ensuring the respondents were asked whether what was said in private and off the record could be used and published.

During open and transparent interviews and ethnographic research, the participants often learn as much about the researcher as they do about them. Therefore, the fact that my official nationality is British (despite feeling half Greek, half English) and that I represent a British university with funding from the British government quickly became known. This was met with a variety of attitudes. Some Palestinians appeared to feel honoured that the British government thought them important enough to 'do' research on but many others were sceptical of the funding I was receiving and were quick to point out Britain's infamous role in the creation of the state of Israel and the plight of Palestinians. I was constantly aware of the potential for their (indirect and subtle) use of me as a way to get political messages across to Britain. As a diasporic population, which is very politicised on the whole, Palestinians in Greece were very keen to tell me about the issues surrounding what they called the Palestinian cause and I certainly felt on many occasions that they were trying to influence me even though they assumed I was supportive. This highlights the problematic and complex nature of power relations within research, and illustrates that power inequalities work both ways. These issues are discussed in more depth below.

There were also Palestinians who refused outright to talk to me and this raises the very important issue of trust. I feel that I was disadvantaged by the fact that I did not speak Arabic and that I was not Palestinian. This was partly because I felt that many participants did not trust me as much as they would have done had I been Palestinian, or actively involved in solving Palestinian problems. They often assumed that I was trying to find out as much as possible on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza or the Middle East and often said that if I really wanted to find out what it meant to be Palestinian that I should go there.



On the whole, they appeared convinced that they, as members of the diaspora were not as important as their Palestinian counterparts in the West Bank and Gaza or in the refugee camps in Lebanon and so forth. They found it hard to understand that I was in fact interested primarily in them and their opinions, identities and experiences. This, coupled with the fact that I am not Palestinian meant that quite a few Palestinians who refused to talk to me did so because they could not easily 'place' or understand either my research or myself. I also had to deal with Palestinians who thought I may be a spy, perhaps for Mossad. Issues of trust and surveillance are crucial to Palestinians and such opinions made me acutely aware of how such issues have influenced their lives. On the other hand, the fact that I am half Greek and that my father and his family were Greek refugees from Smyrni on the coast of Asia Minor who lost everything in the Population Transfer of 1920/21 meant that participants felt an affinity with me. They often said, for example, statements such as "So, you come from a refugee family too..." and so on. There are two sides to the issue of trust, however. Just as they felt they could potentially not trust me or my motives and background, it was often equally hard for me to fully trust them, especially if I could not back up their stories, which I often could not, given the nature of the research and participant anonymity. This raises the issue of the validity and accuracy of information sourced, particularly when there has not been a great deal of research done on the group that is being studied.

The issue with the GUPW is described in detail in Chapter Five. To summarise the situation, at the time of the research, the legality of the GUPW, which I was led to initially believe was legal, was cast into doubt by a group of Palestinians. These Palestinians were trying to create their own what I call 'new' Workers' Union with the support of the embassy who were supposedly against the first or what I call 'old' Union because of its communist leanings. Given that I was in contact with both sides who were both trying to persuade me that they were right and the other side was wrong illustrates the difficulties of knowing who to trust in a situation when two sides are trying to win you over. It also highlights the difficult positions researchers can be put into through no fault of their own, as well as how difficult it may be potentially to come out of the situation unharmed in terms of relations of trust. In this case, the situation



became so bad that towards the end of my fieldwork, I felt it was very hard to trust anyone involved and I tried to distance myself from what appeared to be a very complicated highly politicised, personal and intense affair. Incidentally my attendance at the launch of a Greek political party, mentioned above, illustrates a situation where I was invited along by representatives of the 'new' Union to see the leader of the 'old' Union who had been invited to talk at the meeting and was claiming to represent all Palestinian workers. They were trying to undermine his position by showing how 'false' he supposedly was. A problem occurred when those representing the 'old' Union, such as the leader himself, whom I had interviewed at an earlier date recognised me and realised that I had come with 'the opposition' so to speak. This did not mean an end of my association with the 'old' Union. Rather, they too became involved in trying to persuade me of their innocence and their honest intentions (and at the same time, the dishonest intentions of those involved in trying to set up the 'new' Union). The end result was an increased understanding and appreciation on my part of the messy intricacies, power relations and conflicts that can occur within groups that may on the surface appear or portray themselves as united. Another more unfortunate result was the loss of trust on both sides, as my involvement or knowledge of the affair caused some Palestinians involved to turn against me and to spread rumours about my motives and whether I could be trusted. The issue of trust is certainly an important aspect of any research on people. We, as researchers are often obliged to trust our participants out of necessity and a need to gather concrete 'evidence' but at the same time, their perceptions of us and the trust they have in us influences what they are willing to tell us. Once relations of trust are broken, it is very hard to regain them especially for people within groups such as the Palestinians who feel that they have been subject to surveillance, oppression and marginalisation.

The fact that I am female and look younger than my age had implications for power relations within meetings and discussions with participants, many of whom expressed surprise (and concern) that I looked so young. I often had to tell them my age and qualifications and I think that this also raised issues of trust too, and was another reason why I was asked so many questions about myself. It sometimes appeared that I had to prove myself worthy of asking them questions.



I felt at a definite disadvantage when interviewing men, especially men who were older than me. Their attitude was sometimes arrogant and fairly dismissive, as if they did not take my research or me seriously. They also appeared to talk down to me and often tried to 'educate' me, assuming that my knowledge of many issues would be non-existent or lacking in some way. As I did not show my discomfort with their attitude, the positive side to this was that I gained a deep appreciation of how they were constructing certain historical and contemporary situations. Apart from a group of men who behaved in this way, I felt that the majority of Palestinians I spoke to did respect me, or if they did not, it was not overt. The advantages to being female and looking young were evident in my interviews with younger Palestinians, (and particularly students, who were very willing to talk to me) and with women who, unsurprisingly perhaps, appeared to find it easier to trust me and talk to me more freely. As I also interviewed couples, this raised issues of power relations amongst them and they would often talk animatedly in Arabic to each other at times during the interview. In many cases, the men appeared to be leading the discussions with the women 'adding' to the debate whenever possible. This research was not intended to be couple-based research but it was sometimes necessary to interview couples together as they did not want to be interviewed separately. Other women were, however, quite happy to be interviewed on their own but they appeared to be the ones who were successful professionals in their own right, either as businesswomen or teachers, for example.

Crucially, ethical underpinnings also allow the important issue of representation to be constantly and vigilantly debated and thought about. This is especially important in research where the participants may feel they do not have a 'voice' or have felt silenced and who have been or still feel subject to colonial oppression and occupation. In terms of research on the hybridity and 'in-between-ness' of diasporic people such as Palestinians, the research process may open up spaces of interaction in which knowledges produced are more the result of a dynamic sharing and negotiation of ideas and meanings. Within this research, the use of in-depth discussions with participants in this research rather than the 'expert' academic 'extracting' knowledges in the form of a rigid series of structured questions may have helped achieve this. It is imperative that the



voices of those people being researched are heard as fully as possible and that they are given every opportunity to comment and provide feedback on their input.<sup>2</sup> Ways to ensure that this is built into the research process are important, so that this ‘opening up’ of the representation process is occurring all the time, not merely as an ethical and passive afterthought. This also means that a great deal of thought must be given as to how Palestinian voices, perceptions and experiences are depicted in this thesis. To this end, as much of the interview transcripts have been included in the analytical chapters as possible (as outlined earlier). As Pratt (2000: 649) stresses, geographers have to practice the radical theories and ideas that they have and to “search ...for ways of writing, for our own representational strategies, that challenge the hegemony of dominant ways of seeing”. Being explicit about the rationale behind the use of qualitative methodologies and examining issues such as positionality in detail significantly decrease the likelihood of being criticised for a lack of ‘rigour’ and ‘validity’. There have been claims that human geographers engaged in such types of research have not written extensively enough about how and why they interpret their findings and this has led to researchers such as Baxter and Eyles (1996) to promote the establishment of criteria for evaluation. Therefore, the political and socio-cultural contexts, such as regulation and funding, in which geographical knowledges are being continuously produced and consumed, always have to be taken into account (Sidaway 1997).

Language is always an issue in research on groups whose first language is different to one’s own. It is especially an issue in the context of doing ‘third world’ research (Sidaway 1992) and the benefits of learning a language specifically for research cannot be underestimated (Watson 2004). Within this research, language was an issue that was carefully thought about, as my Arabic language skills did not extend to being able to carry out interviews in Arabic and discuss complex words such as ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ with participants, although this would have been desirable. I did undergo a period of Arabic language training in the UK before I started my fieldwork, but this was only a

---

<sup>2</sup> A short report will be distributed to participants to ensure that they are able to scrutinise how they have been represented. This allows them to raise issues they may feel are unfair or that they do not agree with. This will mean that their comments can be taken on board before work from this thesis is published.



basic course that merely enabled me to speak and understand a few words and phrases. Thus, interviews were carried out in either Greek or English (whatever the participants felt more comfortable with). I translated interviews carried out in Greek into English on the basis of my own bi-lingual skills. A Greek-English dictionary was also used on some occasions in order to help decide on the best translation of certain words that were either ambivalent or for which there was no clear-cut translation into English. The decision on which words to use in the event of ambiguity was made based on the context of the sentence involved. For example, the notion of home is one that posed some problems and that are discussed in more depth in Chapter Four. On the whole, translation proceeded with few difficulties although it is acknowledged that the need to translate in the first place is far from ideal. However, given the specific circumstances of the research, this was unavoidable at times.

The fact that the participants were not speaking their first language was a definite limitation to this research but every effort was made to ensure that they were able to express themselves adequately and in ways that they were comfortable with. Carrying out interviews in people's homes also makes the discussion of themes such as 'home' and 'belonging' a little easier as they are able to show you photographs taken in the 'homeland', or personal research they may have carried out on the village they are originally from (such as who lives in the village now, the dimensions of the house their families had there and so on). It is also possible to question them about objects they have around the home as ways to stimulate discussion and understanding of such complex and often troubling issues.

The issues of understanding and taking emotion into account within geographical and social science research are becoming increasingly important (see, for example, Davidson and Bondi 2004). Not only are we, as researchers, aware of our own positionality, we have to be prepared for emotion, particularly when dealing with issues that may be sensitive for participants. Many discussions involved intense portrayals of emotion and feeling and necessitated large amount of empathy, compassion and understanding on my part, whilst trying at the same time, to talk about the very issues that were causing them pain and anger. These were the two main feelings that appeared during interviews,



although confusion and ambivalence were also very much present too. It is, therefore, crucial to be aware of emotion within research on the part of both researcher and researched that influence the outcome of findings. These findings and empirical analysis are the focus of the next four chapters.



## Negotiating ambivalent ‘Palestinian-ness’: home, belonging and hybridity

This chapter discusses notions of home and belonging and how they are related to hybridity. They form crucial facets of ‘being Palestinian’ in Athens. A distinction is made between home as belonging and the house as a material space in which Palestinians inhabit. The first section discusses symbolic and cultural constructions of home and feelings of belonging. This is followed by an examination of the materiality and significance of hybridity as well as cross-border connections to Palestinian lives. The final section analyses the house (and cultural artefacts within it) as a material, domestic but also hybrid and gendered space in which ‘Palestinian-ness’ is negotiated.

### Introduction

The notion of home is one that is central to many people’s lives and identities. As Ang and Symonds (1997: v) state:

*there can be few terms so densely laden with passionately conflicting meanings than ‘home’...the problematic of home, displacement and belonging has acquired a new historical acuteness in the current age of massive social and economic transformations, as processes of globalisation, transnational migration and postcolonial dislocation are foregrounding the precariousness of established and seemingly anchored definitions of home, identity and security.*

Home, as a contested space and of physical as well as symbolic attachment and importance (Papastergiadis 1998), may be even more significant to migrants and to those living in diaspora such as Palestinians who have been displaced, often as refugees. It can become both a problematic and comforting factor in their lives. According to Thomas (1997: 97), in the case of those in diaspora, one has to



problematise and be aware of the home as a secure or insecure space. It may constitute a “conceptual shift from debilitation to control” but at the same time become a space of unpredictability and fragile connections to the homeland, where experiences of ambivalence and confusion occur that are marked by feelings of “transience, impermanence and separation from family”. In the process, the “home as sanctuary” may become a notion and reality that is more “ephemeral or continuously deferred” (*ibid.*).

Feelings of home and belonging within diasporic spaces are affected by the processes of migration and globalisation and can no longer be simplistically theorised and analysed (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Gilroy 2000). As Rapport and Dawson (1998: 17) stress: “in a world of movement, home becomes an arena where differing interests struggle to define their own spaces within which to localise and cultivate their identity”. They have argued that home is a concept that is always in motion, moving in and between multiple locations. The idea of home is increasingly being seen as flexible, complicated and dynamic (Al-Ali and Koser 2002) and one that has been particularly affected by the processes of globalisation and de-territorialisation (Wong 2002: 169). This is especially the case for migrants and those in diaspora. As a result, this may mean that home entails “an actual place of lived experience and a metaphorical space of personal attachment and identification” (Armbruster 2002: 20). Thus, a notion of home as contested and relational is useful as it captures the sense of ambivalence that often surrounds feelings of home and belonging that can be hard for those in diaspora to define. As the following quote illustrates, it raises numerous questions about feelings of ‘Palestinian-ness’ that are often very difficult to answer, clarify and articulate:

*It is usually assumed that a sense of place or belonging gives a person stability. But what makes a place home? Is it wherever your family is, where you have been brought up? ...Where is home? Is it where our parents are buried? Is home from where you have been displaced, or where you are now?*

(Sarup 1994: 95)



It has to be pointed out here that there is no clear cut or direct translation of 'home' in Greek. Therefore, a note is needed on such language issues. In Greek, 'home' is translated as meaning either 'house' (spiti) or 'country', which can mean 'homeland' or where one comes from (patrida). None of these words carry the same connotation as that of the word 'home' in English, which has multiple meanings and can be rather vague. It is important to understand how such words, which have been much theorised academically, come to be used and understood by real people. In addition, Palestinian usage of the word home can mean any number of things ranging from state to a house. With respect to the notions of home and homeland in Arabic and for Palestinians, Turki (1988: 175) has the following interesting point to make:

*El Blad. This term, so uniquely Palestinian, literally means 'the countries', that is, where Palestinians live. In Palestinian idiom, however, el blad connotes the covert exaltation of a homeland without boundaries, a refuge of the national sensibility as it ferments in exile before it is transplanted home during the awda – another one of those Palestinian words that belong to a language within another language: Return.*

'Palestine' itself as home is not, as Turki (*ibid.*) indirectly suggests, clear-cut, but a deliberately expansive concept, a place that is seen as welcoming to those who rightfully belong there, an idealised land where the boundaries that prevent them from returning are not present and that is waiting for their eventual return. It is also confusing as it can mean historical Palestine, (which the land of Israel now occupies) the West Bank and Gaza only, or it can be both. This research highlights the problematic nature of language in respect to such complex concepts.

### **Where is home? Memories and stories of Palestine**

Many Palestinians interviewed perceive home as being where they currently live, are 'situated' or grounded but at the same time, home is where they feel their roots are and where they feel they belong (often described as their 'homeland').



For many respondents, thinking about and defining home and belonging appears fraught with tensions, confusion and ambiguity. As a result, such notions are extraordinarily difficult for Palestinians such as Edward Said (1986: 30) to articulate:

*Palestine is exile, dispossession, the inaccurate memories of one place slipping into vague memories of another, a confused recovery of general wares, passive presences scattered around in the Arab environment. The story of Palestine cannot be told smoothly. Instead, the past, like the present, offers only occurrences and coincidences. Random.*

1948, the year the state of Israel was created, is remembered by Palestinians as the Nakba or catastrophe and has been very influential in constructions of popular and official memories, narratives and discourses of Palestine. It marked, as Rosemary Sayigh (1998) puts it: “the birth of the Palestinian nation...the beginning of a story”. This is seen as the story of the Palestinian people, of an official ideology of collective constructions of Palestinian ‘identity’ to counter and resist the perceived loss of a homeland and ensuing occupation. At the same time, though, countless personal, individual unofficial voices and stories speak of displacement, exile, rootlessness, struggle, violence and statelessness and of apathy, hope, unity and fragmentation. They all, however, appear to centre round historical and contemporary territorial Palestine: “home is where you are not and where you cannot be” (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 94).

#### Palestine as ambivalent

The perception of Palestine as a home acts as a necessary prerequisite to the perception of Palestine as a homeland, which in turn can become a powerful strategic tool for political constructions of ‘solidarity’ and ‘unity’, key issues, which are discussed in depth in Chapter Five. Khalidi’s (1997: 9, 205) question of “What are the limits of Palestine?” is important. With this query, Khalidi illustrates the ambivalence (but also the perceived potential political strength) of defining belonging and a bounded homeland. He points to the difficulties



involved in imagining a homeland and the tensions involved in deciding and agreeing what constitutes its acceptable territory. He is also asking, however, what has made and makes Palestine and Palestinians distinctive, or uniquely Palestinian historically and leading to the present day. These are difficult and problematic questions Palestinians in Athens are having to negotiate on an everyday basis and to which there are no easy answers.

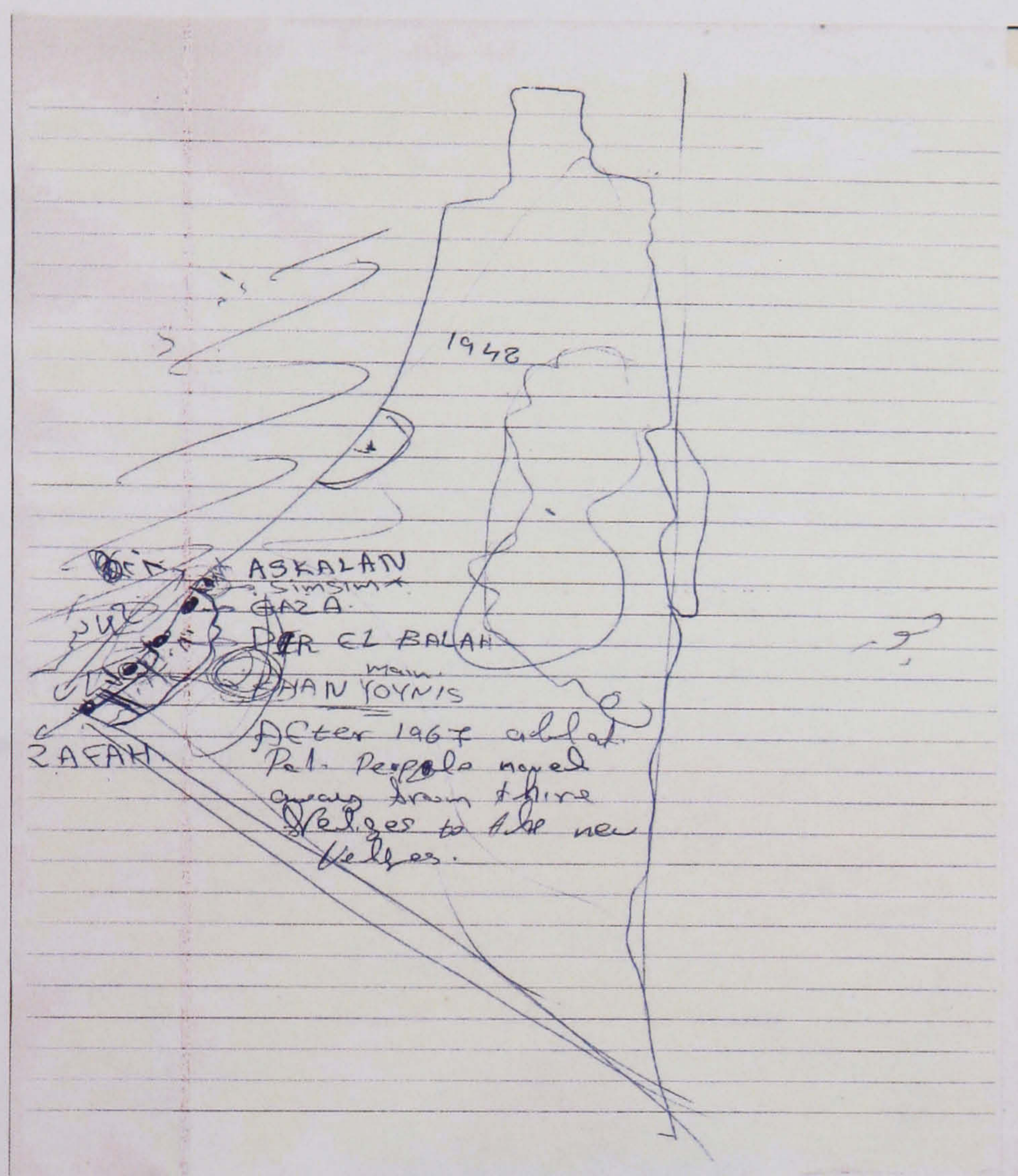
This research echoes Khalidi's concerns and has found that when most participants talk about Palestine as home, they do not readily define where it is exactly in geographical terms. At the same time, the clarity and boundaries maps provide appear to be important to Palestinians and their constructions of home, belonging and 'shared consciousness'. Evidence from this research suggests that for the majority of Palestinians in Athens, having a defined piece of land or territory not necessarily to call home but to belong to and to originate from appears to form a large part of their constructions of what it means to be Palestinian.

A rough map (Figure 6 below) drawn by Rafiq (40, restaurant worker) in order to try and explain his family's displacement from Israel in 1967 into the Gaza Strip provides a good way to introduce and illustrate the complexity of these issues. On the one hand, Rafiq is keen to visually depict his family's forced movement because he feels a map will lend credibility and clarity to his words, to his connections to 'there' and to the viability of a place called Palestine, where he feels he is from. On the other hand, his map also shows the way in which what happened is also now confusing, turbulent and unclear despite being embedded in his mind, constituting a swirl of names kept and places lost. The words and circle depicting 'Khan Younis', for instance, which is where he says his family are originally from in what is now Israel and which, according to Rafiq, was recreated as a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, merge with the names of other places remembered, some written in English, some in Arabic. As a Palestinian who grew up in Gaza, it becomes evident as he draws the map that he is constantly adding layers of memories, in the form of areas that he feels are important historically to his family's story of displacement, as he remembers them. As a result, his process of drawing is not flowing or neat, but jolted and full of indecision, stopping and starting. At the same time, however, he is also



trying to show the political significance of his family's and other Palestinians' displacement by highlighting the West Bank and writing '1948' to show the area that constituted historical Palestine.

**Figure 6 – Rafiq's drawing depicting his family's displacement in 1967**



### Home as symbolic attachment

The difficulties of defining a concrete home to belong to also trigger the widespread use of maps as ways to symbolise, denote and solidify belonging to a defined territory that Palestinians are connected to. The cultural and political significance of the ways in which maps are used by diasporic Palestinian individuals and organisations cannot be ignored. The Right of Return to historical Palestine is still something many Palestinians in Athens appear to hang onto and insist will happen sometime in the future and it seems to be a goal that they are willing to work towards and not give up on. This is probably why maps of Palestine, which appear in leaflets or as embroideries in people's homes in Greece illustrate Palestine as being the whole of the historical area of Palestine



(see Figure 7 below). For example, Abir (38, Arabic teacher) is keen to show me a carefully embroidered map of historical Palestine that is prominently placed in the main hall of her apartment and that is one of the first things a visitor to the house sees as they walk in.<sup>1</sup> As she points out how beautiful it is and how exquisite the stitching is, it becomes clear that it is an artefact she is proud of and wants to show off. However, it also highlights her symbolic attachment and connections to a Palestine that has been lost but is being kept alive in such images and imaginations. As she says: “this is where I am from originally”. At the same time, such maps stress the political project of self-determination and the constructions of a bounded territory (and consequent state) in which to potentially unite Palestinians. This can be seen in Figure 7 below, which denotes the motif of the PLO in a locally produced leaflet on the Palestinian situation. The map represented below the Palestinian flag is that of historical Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 7 - The symbolic use of maps of historical Palestine**



(Source: Palestine, The Difficult Road 2002: 23)

<sup>1</sup> The use of such possessions and cultural objects within the home as a material, domestic space are discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> This image of historical Palestine has already been depicted in Figure 1 (Chapter One).



Palestinian activist websites, for example, also reveal an array of maps that are used to support their case and the Palestinian cause.<sup>3</sup>

Palestinians in Athens may use maps to symbolise and illustrate the Palestine they feel they belong to, but this belonging to ‘there’ needs to be analysed further. As Bowman (1993: 82) stresses, “‘Palestine’ will be imagined differently by Palestinians in different situations”. In other words, he appears to be saying that Palestine (as a home and/or homeland) is a dynamic spatial and temporal construction. This, in turn, has implications for potential political visions for the future.<sup>4</sup> Interviews reveal that there are a number of ways in which Palestine is depicted and this is largely related to the geographical area they are from originally and the connections they imagine they have to this place. Despite this though, for many Palestinians in Athens, the idea of a shared Palestine that they can all relate to in some way seems to be pervasive enough to overcome individual differences and perceptions of where this Palestine is exactly because of the large effect the idea of territorial Palestine has had symbolically on their minds and lives. Therefore, it is crucial to appreciate the importance of such stories in creating and maintaining sentiments of ‘shared consciousness’ that all Palestinians can ascribe to in some way.

Palestine may constitute where many Palestinians in Athens feel their ‘true’ or ‘original’ home is. However, this may not allow them to fully accept or create ‘new’ homes in diaspora, despite the fact that the majority of participants feel Greece is a relatively friendly and supportive country for them to live in. Images, memories and stories of Palestine as home appear to haunt Palestinians wherever they go even if they are only constructed snapshots of a reality that is in the past. Although memories fade with time, they can be kept alive and for many diasporic Palestinians in Athens, have helped them maintain symbolic connections with home, thereby making the idea of a ‘homeland’ and ultimately of self-determination possible.

---

<sup>3</sup> See for example, [www.palestine-net.com](http://www.palestine-net.com), [www.hejleh.com/countries/palestine.html](http://www.hejleh.com/countries/palestine.html), [www.4data.ca/palestine/111largemaps.html](http://www.4data.ca/palestine/111largemaps.html), [www.4data.ca/palestine/palestine.html](http://www.4data.ca/palestine/palestine.html), [www.prc.org/uk/prcmap/MAP/MapMain.asp?MapLang=English](http://www.prc.org/uk/prcmap/MAP/MapMain.asp?MapLang=English), [www.al-awda.org/therefugeeprimer](http://www.al-awda.org/therefugeeprimer).

<sup>4</sup> Differing Palestinian visions of a future Palestinian state are discussed in more depth in Chapter Six.



Evidence from interviews indicates that for Palestinians who originated in what is now called Israel, often the village or town from which their families came originally is seen as home. They describe with great detail the village and house in which their family once lived. These act as a powerful (yet often static) symbol and reminder of what has been lost and needs to be regained. For example, in response to a questions asking him where he felt he was from, Majid (35, a foreign company employee or FCE for short) says:

*I am from Palestine, from Safad, which is to the north. My grandparents left in 1948. Well, my grandfather didn't. He refused to leave his home and his land and so he was killed. The rest of my family went to Lebanon where things are very difficult for the Palestinians... The village I come from is close to the Golan Heights, on the side of a mountain. It is a green area and my grandparents always described how beautiful it is. I always wondered you know, if it was actually as beautiful as they described. But when I was in Canada I was in this fast food place and I saw an employee with the same surname as me. I asked him where he was from and he said Palestine. It turned out that he was originally from a village close to mine. And some time later, I got a parcel in the post. It was a video of the area where I come from and of my village as well. And it looked so beautiful in real life. You know it reminded me of Parnitha<sup>5</sup> where we went recently because it is on a mountain and it is green. It was very emotional actually seeing the piece of land that I came from and I asked my parents for all the information they had on it, the dimensions and the exact location so that I would have a clear idea of it in my head and I have a large file full of information on it (laughs). This is where I come from, where my roots are, in the land. This is what is important to Palestinians – the land that they have and they have lost. It is mainly a territorial issue, based around land. I know that there are Polish Jews living on my land now and this really upsets me. Why come all the way from somewhere else to take over land that belongs to someone else? It doesn't make sense. They had a home in Poland – why take over someone else's land and make them leave?*

---

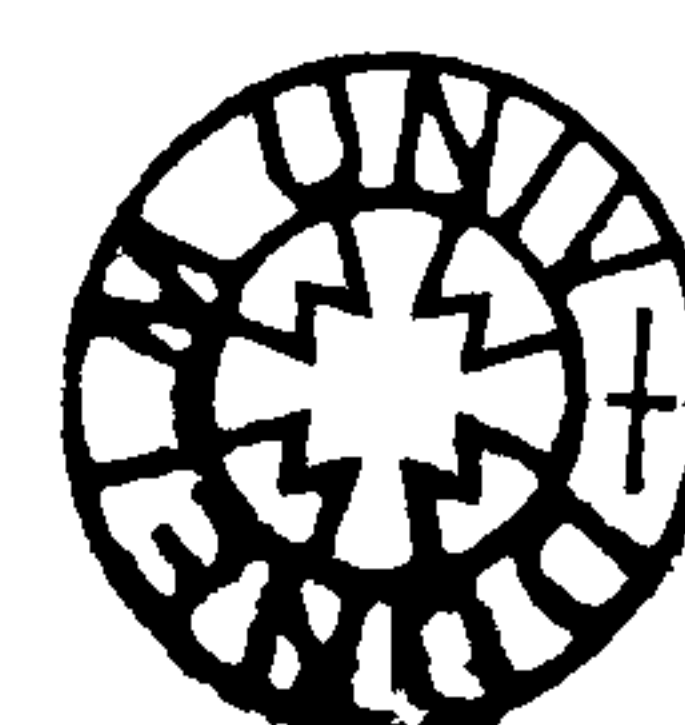
<sup>5</sup> Parnitha is the name of the mountain at Mt Parnitha National Park, which lies around 30 km north of Athens.



Here, home appears in idealised form as a concrete space of security and somewhere to hold onto in the midst of exile, insecurity and (im)mobility. Palestine becomes a romanticised place where all problems can disappear. Such stories often come hand in hand with painful narratives of forced displacement and can heighten perceptions of the situation prior to exile as ‘good’ and subsequent realities as ‘bad’, which can also help trigger problematic desires to return to a mythical homeland that in reality is very different to the one imagined. Ibrahim (32, construction worker) has a story similar to Majid’s to tell:

*From 1948, those who left then, even they cannot go back. So only those in '67 who are in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank who are allowed to come and go. Those who left in 1948, their land is called Israel now. The Green line separates the two areas. From the same town that my father is from, which is called Safad, which is to the North, close to Lebanon and there is a lake, there were some people who went to America and they got American citizenship and they went back and they have taken photos of the area and my father saw them and he was so excited. The door of the house was still as it was because the Israelis haven't touched some villages yet. You know what this meant for my father. My father, when he left, he was 14, 15 years old and he has been wounded by a Jewish bullet and so he remembers and he wishes so much that he could return to his wonderful country. This is why it is etched into our minds that this country is ours. We have to get it back because let's say you have your house with its rooms, kitchen and bathroom and someone comes with force and says I'm going to live and stay in your house now. I'm going to take these two rooms and the kitchen and you can have the toilet. Would you accept that seeing as the house is yours? You have to fight to get it back.*

What emerges from both voices is a sense of injustice and having been wronged, which they feel is very hard to forget. These seem to be words that have been repeated again and again, like a mantra of suffering and loss that refuses to go away, keeping the idea of a home and of a homeland alive in people's minds. In Athens, stories about where they come from are retold by





Palestinians of all classes and financial situations and it is this perhaps that explains why they are felt to be so important for unification purposes and held onto so much. The metaphor of a house is often used to denote or explain what Palestinians in Athens feel has happened to them and to Palestine. Such descriptions illustrate the confluences and connections between symbolic and material notions of the house, home and homeland. The use of the image of the house is, however, more than just a metaphor as it stresses the material dispossession of Palestinian homes many Palestinians in Athens feel is unjust. As a result, it is also then used to demonstrate the broader issues of displacement and loss Palestinians in diaspora feel. The symbolic and political importance of Palestine or 'Filastin'<sup>6</sup> as a homeland, the Nakba and of displacement is illustrated by Lina (38, businesswoman), who has never been to Palestine:

*My father was from Yaffa, Jaffa. When he was sixteen, he went to the United States to study. His father, my grandfather, he had 22 stremmata<sup>7</sup> of land of oranges, the area is famous for its oranges and of course he was very well off and after 1947, or '48 or '49, I don't remember exactly, the Israelis they kicked him out indirectly. I will tell you how and he was walking with my grandmother and my other uncles, they were trying to leave Palestine and go to the borders with Jordan because they left with only one shirt and a pair of trousers and Israel took all our property and they went to Jordan and they started from scratch. Now, why I said they left by force but indirectly, because Israel at that time, when they established their country in Palestine, they didn't force you to leave and push you away from your house, but they stopped you taking advantage of your land, like all the oranges, the products that were coming out of our land, they were taking it.*

Liz: By force?

Lina: *Of course by force and nobody could stop them or tell them anything because they had the weapons and they – you know the Arabs, all their lives,*

---

<sup>6</sup> 'Filastin' is the Arabic word for 'Palestine'.

<sup>7</sup> Here, Lina uses the Greek word, 'stremmata' in order to illustrate the size of the land her grandfather had. One stremma is a quarter of an acre.



*they are with stones. Who has the weapons? The organisation, the groups, not the people, because my family had nothing to do with politics and plus psychological war and it was difficult, like my father at that time was 17, or 18 I don't remember, but his brothers who were younger, they were still children, students and my grandfather was very worried about them, because the Israeli military, the police, sometimes what would happen, they would go to the area and collect all the boys of this age whether you did something or not and my grandfather was afraid for his sons, so that was why he left plus they were living in fear, plus they couldn't touch anything from the land.*

Liz: They couldn't make a living?

*Lina: Nothing, nothing. They didn't have, plus some of their money in the bank was frozen – they couldn't take it out. From a very well off family in Jaffa they went to Jordan with just one pair of shoes and they started from scratch. My father never went back to Palestine, because after the States, he started working in an American-Lebanese company and then he went to Africa. And from the rest of my family, no-one has gone back because they have nothing there, we have nothing left. Who would go there now and ask for our land? And to be honest, I don't want ever to go there until it's free land and we believe, and I believe strongly that one day it will come back to us and after maybe the third generation, maybe my grandson's generation, because all this blood, they say in Arabic that blood never becomes water, so the land is built on the blood of the Palestinians, so I think one day it will come back. It's like the Greeks – they had 400 years of occupation from the Turks – they said we are Greeks, it's our land and the Turks were there 400 years. It's like now if I tell any person from Israel that it is my country they will say no, we are there, it's called Israel. It's not, you are just occupying us.*

It is highly likely that Lina's story of her family's displacement and the creation of the state of Israel would ring true or at least arouse sympathy for many Palestinians in Athens. Even if families of interviewees have not had similar experiences, they know families who have and they are often acutely



aware of the circumstances (from a Palestinian perspective) surrounding the creation of the state of Israel. Those from historical Palestine who have never been there are less likely to want to return unless they can go back to the village from which they originate, which for the majority of Palestinians interviewed appears to be largely inaccessible. This may be an incentive not to return and to make do elsewhere but this does not mean that they do not want self-determination – many Palestinians in Athens do in principle. They feel that all Palestinians should have a recognised country to which to belong, go back to live in or visit when and if they please.

The majority of Palestinian respondents whose families originated in what is now Israel have never been back. Yet, for many, Palestine is still perceived as home, despite the fact that they have never been or lived there. This is because, as Nisreen (23, President of GUPS), points out: “You know, I know that I’ll never go there, or if I go, I’ll go as a tourist, or I’ll never go and live there, but still I can’t say that I am Greek, even if I will be here 30 years”. For Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, home can also be problematic. Karim, (24, student), who has only recently moved to Greece and whose family originates from the West Bank, feels his home is in Jordan. However, he still feels Palestinian because:

*you can’t forget your origin. There is a saying in Arabic, which says that “he who doesn’t have an origin, doesn’t have a present”. But I can never forget Jordan either, and the fact that I was born there and that I grew up there. Jordan has been good to me and my family. I cannot forget that, but I also can’t forget Palestine. When people here ask me where I am from I say I am a Palestinian from Jordan. I love both countries.*

Sa’id (25, student) also finds the question of where his home is “very tricky”. He says that at a conference organised by the International Union of Socialist Youth on peace, at which Israelis were also present, he was asked the same question by a German psychologist: “And I said, because the Israeli was looking at me, that your home is where your roots come from. And for the first time, the Israeli agreed with me”. For Sa’id, Palestine is: “the whole of Palestine, pre 1948.



That's my hope. But I'll settle for the lands of 1967 now, the way things are. Because I think, let's not kid ourselves – we cannot get the whole of Palestine now". Sa'id feels that he belongs in pre 1948 Palestine and that his home is there, despite the fact that he is originally from the West Bank. This illustrates the salience of a historical and territorial Palestine as home (or a homeland) to which to belong, whether Palestinians are from there originally or not.<sup>8</sup>

### Belonging as rootedness

The importance of roots for those in diaspora is described by Thomas (1997: 95) as: "the often profound desire of those who have left a homeland behind to be 'in place' and to be connected and rooted to the landscape [and] has for most part been ignored by social analysts". The idea of being 'rooted' to the land from which they have come appears to be an important one in many negotiations of 'Palestinian-ness' and perceptions of home and homeland. Lindholm Schulz (2003: 99) points out, however, that for Palestinians, the ties and the romantic fixation to this land often remain static and unchanging and it is "portrayed as 'primordially', essentially Arab". Turki, for example, (1988: 203) stresses that Palestinians are the 'native' people of Palestine. Such notions of a specific land or territory to which they can belong appear to be powerful and pervasive amongst Palestinians in Athens. As Heela (female, 40, FCE) stresses: "everyone needs roots...your identity, where you belong is a very important aspect of your life, of who you are...it defines you as a person". For Turki (1988: 65), Palestinian land or 'el ard' has always been a "common centre" that has held all Palestinians, a womb from which all Palestinians emerged, before "the - essentially Western - concept of nationhood was added to (their) repertoire of historical consciousness". He stresses what he feels is a "mystical affinity between people and their land...without it a Palestinian could not establish his or her identity" (*ibid.*). As a self-proclaimed Palestinian revolutionary, he stresses the significance of the symbolic attachments to a territorial homeland as the basis for resistance and 'identity politics'.

---

<sup>8</sup> Despite Sa'id's diasporic existence and the fact that he has never been to Palestine, politics seems to form an important aspect of his life. Thus, it may be true that political involvement for Palestinians is closely associated with the perception of Palestine not only as home, but also as a homeland and political goal, so that self-determination can eventually occur.



The majority of Palestinian respondents who have never been to Palestine keep themselves aware of what is going on and have an idea of the historical issues that have led to the present state of affairs. As a result, they often do not feel completely 'separate' to Palestine, even though they may personally experience such emotions occasionally. In fact, unlike Palestinians in other European countries, such as in Sweden (according to Ghani 2000), many Palestinians in Greece do not portray themselves as feeling detached from Palestine. Despite their exile, Palestine as a homeland and space to which to belong, either materially or metaphorically, appears to remain an important part of their hearts and minds, an integral part of their everyday lives and sense of 'Palestinian-ness'. This may be linked to Greece's geographical proximity to Palestine and support for Palestinians and their cause, allowing feelings of belonging as well as cross-border connections to persevere. This also appears to feed the appetite for politicisation displayed by many Palestinians in Athens.

#### 'Palestine' as a material reality

Palestinians who originate from the West Bank and Gaza and who have lived there have particular stories to tell as do those who are refugees within these areas and who were displaced in 1967. Palestine is usually a material reality for them as they will have often lived in the land that they call home. Their Palestine may not be wrapped in a mythical haze but for those living in Greece it is still a memory, which for some may be recent but for many others is distant. This is especially the case for those who have not been able to return because of their political affiliations and activism. Many Palestinians who have lived in the West Bank and Gaza feel they know the 'real' Palestine because they have experienced living there. They can describe where they come from in detail and have seen the situation there with their own eyes. As Tamara, (32, researcher) who often travels to her home in Gaza says:

*You feel welcomed there. There's a very warm atmosphere, but the levels of poverty shock you and how people live but they do cope and this is surprising. There are children running around in the street. There are both big nice buildings, which are modern, and old dilapidated houses. People there feel that*



*they are able to unite together and survive together, but there are many difficulties for them. There are explosions and the children are too hyper as a result; they have a very different upbringing to other children.*

Those who have lived there often feel ‘closer’ to events and feel more able to understand and explain the situation. Two men, the first from Bethlehem and the second from Hebron describe how their town has changed over time:

*It's an old city. It has a lot of history and character as you can imagine. But it has changed over the years – it's got bigger as there are more people, buildings. It's becoming more modern with the tall buildings and shops. When I was a child things were very different in the sense that then, there were no checkpoints, before 1989. Then, after, you had the temporary checkpoints and now they have become permanent. Now, it's so difficult. There are so many restrictions. Many who live in one place have to work somewhere else and it's hard for them to get there every day. It is a catastrophic situation.*

(Abdul, 28, casual office worker)

*I am originally from Hebron, in Palestine. I grew up there. I was born in 1962. I went to school there; I have many memories from there, from my childhood, from the town, of playing with my friends; they are all good memories...Well, we gave up a lot of things because of the Occupation. We couldn't travel; there were restrictions. We were always in fear, so there were many psychological pressures on us growing up and on our families. We lost many days of school because it was closed so often. We saw so many things. Also, there were no opportunities or possibilities there. We, those of us who lived through it, we really know what it was like, but I think, in a way, we got used to the bad situation; it was our life and we dealt with it and got on with our daily lives as well as we could; we didn't have any other choice.*

(Mustafa, 42, unemployed)

Mustafa's use of the word ‘Occupation’ highlights the symbolic and political use of words such as ‘Palestine’ or ‘Occupied Territories’. The former often



represents historical Palestine (that most respondents wish to see a return to) and the latter the West Bank and Gaza (as a space that is occupied and needs to be liberated); both, however, highlight the land as problematic and for many participants, uses of these words can be blurred.

For those from the West Bank and Gaza, perceptions of the ‘reality’ of the situation can also make things more emotionally difficult for them. In response to a question on the building of settlements, Maha, (29, housewife) from Nablus, explains:

*I will be much more emotional [than Palestinians who have not lived there] because I lived there, my family lives there, they are suffering every day and I go through difficulties when I go to my town from Jordan every year, I could not go since 1997 because of this. I have 2 children and I don't want them to see this suffering. When I see the wall, when I see the people going through these checkpoints, I am from the people that they don't want, who even accepted or thought that we could live in one state, 2 peoples under one state but now I cannot see that, no way can I see that after this and I cannot see a state with 22% of the land, I cannot, because every time we ask, they ask more, every time we want, they want more, so with this, we cannot find a solution, we cannot.*

The situation takes on a new, much more potentially personal meaning, and as Maha illustrates, this proximity psychologically can have a deep impact on how they perceive the political climate in the region, as well as their thoughts on how to solve the problems. Rania (38, FCE), another mother of two, also stresses the fact that she knows “what it is really like there, because I lived there and I saw how it was. I lived through the stages of the occupation”. According to her, it is both important and painful for her to have experienced this, as the events that unfold in the region take on a different meaning for her and as a result she feels she is better equipped to comment on what the situation is ‘really like’. Such descriptions and the emotions they often trigger may serve to strengthen attachments to their place of origin and former residence. Those who have lived there are also more likely to have more substantial and frequent contact with friends and relatives who, as Rania says “can tell me exactly what’s going on,



which the news does not always show”. This psychological proximity to events there despite living in Greece seems to have a role to play in Palestinian feelings of hybridity discussed subsequently in this chapter.

Visiting Palestine, the area where their family is from originally, or where relatives live in the West Bank and Gaza can also have a potentially significant impact on perceptions of home, belonging and ‘Palestinian-ness’. Dina (17, still at school) remembers:

*the little things...going hunting with my uncles in the middle of the night...we walked there. It was in the middle of nowhere. It was a different world. I remember the Israeli troops were always trying to come into the town. I remember feeling like an outsider. The other kids were really aggressive, throwing stones...but eventually we became part of it. I realised that the land was rooted in us, so we were related to it in the end and I found myself throwing stones...another time, I was sitting on the steps of my house there in my shorts and t-shirt and a young Palestinian girl came up to me. She was fully covered. I can't remember exactly what she said, but she disapproved of what I was wearing. I couldn't understand why she and others were like that. I respect what they choose to wear and they should respect what I want to wear. I am Palestinian, but I have grown up in Greece, so I am different I suppose and this has influenced me. But I try to understand them, so they should try and understand me and what being Palestinian means to me.*

Dina's visits to Qualqilya, in the West Bank, are etched in her memory and have altered her perceptions of what it means to be Palestinian over time and space, which are both problematic and empowering for her. Omar, Dina's brother, (20, student) who was with her when she visited Palestine, describes his feelings on his first visit as a child: “It was how a newborn baby sees colours. I felt myself staring, trying to grasp the fact that I was in Palestine, that I was Palestinian, despite growing up in Greece”. Visits to Palestine are very important symbolically for Palestinians in diaspora. Barghouti's (2004) book, ‘I Saw Ramallah’, which describes his visit to the West Bank after thirty years of exile is a good example of this.



### Differentiating between home and belonging

Of those respondents who feel that their home is in Greece, or anywhere apart from historical Palestine or the Occupied Territories, the majority still feel Palestinian and a sense of belonging 'there'. The land of Palestine is where they feel their roots lie and where they feel that they are from originally. Home and belonging do not necessarily go hand in hand and, therefore, must be differentiated. Majid and Fadila, a couple with two children, who feel that Greece is their temporary home and would like to move back to the Middle East to live, discuss their sense of belonging, explaining that, "Palestine is in our blood" (Fadila, 30, housewife). For them, however, Palestine is not home, because: "We have never lived there, but it is where we are from, even though we do not live there and have never been there" (Majid, 36, FCE). They, like others, believe that even though they live in one place and their immediate material home is there, they can feel they belong in Palestine. This highlights the issue of the differences between symbolic and material understandings of home. For Majid and Fadila, their house in Greece is their material home, but Palestine is their symbolic home, where they feel they belong and which constitutes a territorial space to which to form attachments over time and space. Ibrahim, (32, construction worker) displays similar views to Fadila and Majid:

*You may live here, but your country, Palestine, still exists and you feel you belong there. Because there are Greeks that live in America, in Germany, but they don't stop being or feeling Greek do they? They don't change.*

Liz: So you would say that you were from Palestine?

Ibrahim: *Well, yes, of course. Palestine, for us, is a question of life.*

Sami, (57, politician) another man who has lived in Greece for over 30 years and who is a Greek citizen, feels that home is in Greece. At the same time, however, he maintains that he is Greek-Palestinian and that he can never forget where he came from originally. Abir, (female, 38, Arabic teacher) who is heavily involved in fundraising activities to help Palestinians, raises an interesting point:



*I feel that my home is in Lebanon, but if someone were to ask me where I'm from, I would say Palestine. You feel guilty if you don't mention Palestine, like if you don't mention it, it will be cancelled or wiped out and forgotten.*

Abir is making a political point about not denying the existence of Palestine. At the same time, the guilt she feels is indicative of the need Palestinians have to belong to a territory called Palestine. This raises the issue of whether Palestinians differentiate between home and homeland, a point similar to the one discussed above, on the difference between home and belonging. Sa'id, (25, student) for example, does not feel that there is a difference between his home and his homeland because "it's inevitable; in the end we're all going back". For Sa'id, therefore, home as homeland is inherently a political notion. His material and domestic everyday surroundings in Athens appear to pale in significance to Palestine, his 'true' home. Abir and Sa'id's views both highlight the use of a territorially defined Palestine as political tool. Strong convictions about eventual return appear to need a strong and committed awareness of the ties that bind a person to his or her land. At the same time, statements such as Abir's illustrate the insecurity that exile and the political situation in Palestine triggers, which means that it is very difficult for Palestinians to forget where they have come from. This feeling appears to be exacerbated because of the continuing conflict there and the historical factors leading to the present situation. It is interesting, however, to note the differences between Palestinians who do and do not feel that Palestine is home in terms of their political thought and involvement. Palestinians who do not feel that Palestine is their home still advocate the Palestinian cause, because they identify with it.

### **Negotiating the realities of everyday hybridity in diaspora**

As discussed in Chapter Two, it is increasingly common to conceptualise migrants and those in diaspora as 'travelling' (Clifford 1997) or 'on the move', in order to denote the transgression of boundaries that such people may be involved in psychologically as well as materially. Although such views are welcome because they are committed to emphasising the connections between people and places, they sometimes have a tendency to over romanticise or



emphasise movement. This may come at the expense of an appreciation and exploration of power inequalities and feelings of rootlessness, potential immobility and vulnerability, which may be far from celebratory for those involved. Therefore, movement and conceptions of home and belonging as bounded and unbounded can be useful. For those in diaspora, perceptions of home and belonging, like the effects of hybridity and globalisation, may also be positive and negative; what is certain is that they are complex and problematic. The identities of those in diaspora and exile are often seen as hybrid because of the ways in which such peoples consciously and subconsciously deal with living 'here' and 'there' or 'in-between', where they are at present and where they have come from or their perceived homeland. Their displacement and exile often acts as a starting point for feelings of home and belonging as hybrid and 'in-between' that then become the basis of them feeling, being and acting as hybrid 'subjects'.

Although hybridity as a term is used in a very general sense throughout this thesis, it is very useful because it seems to accurately describe the ambivalence and liminality of Palestinian existence and identities in Greece. Palestinians may live 'here' in Greece, but their minds and lives are connected to 'there'. For many Palestinians in Athens, therefore, their home is in Palestine yet at the same time, their everyday lives and material spaces of residence in Athens serve to both reinforce and undermine such conceptions and attachments. 'Being Palestinian' involves the hybrid and daily use of disjointed symbolic and material spaces, times, memories, stories, attachments and connections. As a result, they often have to deal with their inherent 'in-between-ness' and the complex issues of home and belonging that are often integral to such feelings of hybridity. For example, Said (1986: 6) believes that "essentially unconventional, hybrid and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us". This is because "all residence is exile. We linger in nondescript places, nether here nor there" (*ibid.*: 21). As a result, he feels Palestinians are "migrants and perhaps hybrids in, but not of any situation in which we find ourselves" (*ibid.*: 164).

There are differences in the extent to which Palestinians in Athens feel 'in-between' and it is unsurprising that Palestinians in Athens negotiate such feelings differently and dynamically. One good example of this is through the



use of language. Shapiro (2000: 90) has noted how the multiple use of language may weaken the “system of national myth”. For example, participants may use Greek, English and Arabic interchangeably and this can encourage feelings of hybrid and dynamic constructions of what it means to be a diverse group of people. Such use of languages by some Palestinians in their everyday life may, therefore, be seen as ways in which diasporic negotiations of ‘being Palestinian’ are subverting and disjoining narratives of a homogenised Palestinian ‘identity’. In addition, this may also serve to influence their dealings with Greek people and society; both their ambivalent feelings of ‘Greek-ness’ and ‘Palestinian-ness’ present a rupture to the ‘national’ languages and ‘cultures’ of both Greece and Palestine.

For those Palestinians who do not work for foreign companies and who speak more Greek than Arabic in their daily lives, Greek may become easier to use than Arabic and their speech may be punctuated with both Greek and Arabic. At a meeting of the student Union, for example, the members talk a mixture of Greek and Arabic as they discuss situations in Greece and in Palestine. For students and respondents who speak Greek, such a mixing of languages appears to be common. Yet, for others, speaking Greek, although seen as a necessity for working in Greece, is actively discouraged in the home (even though children may go or will go to a Greek school). Palestinians who work for foreign companies, for example, may try to learn Greek as they also encourage their children to speak Arabic and often admit that their children may speak both Greek and English better than they do if they go to an international school. However, these Palestinians are less likely to learn Greek than those who are self-employed or who work for Greek businesses or organisations.<sup>9</sup>

### Repercussions of cross-border connections

The families of the majority of Palestinians in Athens are spread around the world, or certainly the Middle East; they are with and without roots, making do, surviving, remembering and imagining Palestine. Although theories of identities

---

<sup>9</sup> There are numerous other examples of such uses of language. The registration form that has to be filled in by Palestinians who would like to join the Parikia is written in both Greek and Arabic. Also, respondents speaking in English during discussions often used Greek or Arabic words on purpose to try to better explain what they meant, but more often did so without realising.



as ‘travelling’ or ‘in motion’ are useful, practically, many Palestinians face numerous restrictions in terms of their physical mobility, as a result of their citizenship statuses.<sup>10</sup> Such immobilities do not mean, however, that Palestinians do not feel they are ‘in-between’ or disconnected to Palestine; physical immobilities do not erase or make psychological and symbolic mobilities impossible. Such physical lack of connection<sup>11</sup> may also strengthen the resolve to remain connected and feel Palestinian at all costs. At the same time, constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’, home and belonging appear to be largely influenced by cross-border connections, in terms of communications (such as phone-calls and emails), media (satellite television and the internet) and monetary transactions (sending money to support one’s family).<sup>12</sup> Cultural artefacts, personal possessions and diasporic spaces can also act as symbolic attachments and forms of connection to Palestine.

Cross-border connections have a crucial role to play in Palestinians positionings as hybrid as they make sense of finding out and listening to what is going on ‘there’ and ‘here’. As I interview Bilal, (33, FCE) for example, he receives a phone call from his family who inform him that a cousin of his has been killed. He stresses that whether they like it or not, he and his wife are always connected to Palestine. His apparent shock and sadness coupled with his pragmatism and feelings of being lucky at being given the opportunity to live and work in Greece that emerge later in the interview illustrate the opportunities, difficulties and tensions inherent in living ‘in-between’ ‘here’ and ‘there’. Whilst interviewing another family, the parents of the wife, Samira, call from the West Bank and both husband and wife take it in turns to speak to them at length

---

<sup>10</sup> This is despite the fact that many Palestinians and their families have moved around the Middle East before arriving in Greece. Such movements are not necessarily voluntary and may be problematic because of the often complex and ambiguous citizenship statuses many Palestinians have. Chapter Six describes such issues surrounding citizenship in more detail.

<sup>11</sup> Immobilities are often imposed, created and enforced by nation-states; therefore, one could see hybridity as a ‘threat’ to such attempts. If one perceives the world as being interconnected and mobile, due to globalisation and cross-border connections, it is often impossible to think of spaces/times as separate. Yet, the nation-state and constructions of ‘national identity’ are attempts to do just that – to imagine, construct and keep people’s dynamic negotiations, representations and positionings of who they are and where they belong static and unchanging so that the state’s carefully crafted and maintained hegemony and viability is not threatened (see Chapters Two and Five for more on this).

<sup>12</sup> Theoretical aspects of cross-border connections have already been discussed in Chapter Two; however, their material effects on Palestinian feelings of belonging and hybridity are also examined in more detail subsequently in this chapter.



(interview with Samira, 38, artist/housewife and Mourid, 38, FCE). They apologise but point out that it is important to them to have their weekly talk and that it is not always easy for the parents to ring; the call, therefore, has to be taken. Watching the news, reading newspapers, looking on the internet, talking to family, friends and colleagues are all activities that solidify these connections that are very hard to sever, especially given the severity of the situation in Palestine. In relation to this, Sana, (34, housewife) stresses:

*I am connected to there, always. During the Arafat incident, when he was surrounded, I couldn't sleep, I was sick. I was in pain, I couldn't eat – I was very tense. I feel that I belong by following what is happening there...all my mind was there. If there is something bad, we are all glued to the TV, calling each other, saying what is the news, did you see it?*

Rafat (48, FCE and PLO representative in Athens) also appears to relate to such negative feelings of attachment:

*Every time the phone rings at 11pm, I tremble and imagine that something bad has happened to my family, my friends, so although I know that I am not in danger here, I'm affected by what is going on there all the time. I speak to my family every day. But it's tragic that I can't see them and have to phone them.*

Such connections are problematic for some Palestinians in Athens. Other Palestinians feel they must resist the temptation to always feel connected to there, because they are not there physically and it is hard to feel as if they are:

*If you watch the news all the time – well you can't can you? I can't be connected to there all the time because I am here. I need a change. I can't watch it all the time. I'm busy. I have a lot of responsibility. My husband is away a lot. I have time to watch the news more, but I don't always want to focus on it. I need to get away from it.*

(Ghada, 32, housewife)



All these cross-border connections, both sporadic and continuous (which are experienced as positive and negative) are important in negotiations and constructions of 'Palestinian-ness' in Greece. How Palestinians in Athens relate to and negotiate hybridity may depend on the strength and nature of these symbolic and material cross-border networks and relations, as well as specific and strategic temporal and spatial cultural, social and political subjectivities. This research has found that Palestinians who do not work for Arabic-owned foreign companies or who are married to Greeks and have children who are raised in Greece appear to feel more established. This may also be because of the length of time they have lived in Athens. They seem to be more likely to feel torn between Greece and Palestine and to live out and negotiate lives and spaces as hybrid and more of a fluid mix of 'here' and 'there'. Despite this, as outlined above, they (and often their children) still perceive themselves as Palestinian and/or as belonging to Palestine. As Lindholm Schulz (2003: 173) points out: "intermarriages have introduced an additional aspect of hybrid or mixed identities, even though the children of such couples frequently are considered and see themselves as Palestinian".

For Palestinians who work for foreign companies, life appears to be more transient as well as perhaps more insecure, yet their lives too can be seen as hybrid as they position themselves as transient 'foreigners', while taking advantage of what Greece has to offer them. Their employment in Greece, the affection many appear to have for Greece and Greek people and their way of life has allowed them to feel 'at home' in Greece whilst still actively maintaining their 'Palestinian-ness' through cross-border connections to the homeland and the Middle East. Despite their less frequent social association with Greek people, poorer knowledge of the Greek language and 'sheltered protection' of their foreign company employment, their perceptions of themselves as Palestinian are intimately tied up with the fact that they do live in Athens and have these cross-border connections. In addition to this, as many Palestinians in Greece have lived or passed through one or more Middle Eastern countries on their way to Greece and many have never been to Palestine, their political, social and cultural identities have to be seen as situated, dynamic and open to temporal and spatial influences and positionings. For example, those Palestinians who have moved to



Greece from Lebanon (or the West Bank and Gaza), where the situation for Palestinians is hard are more likely to feel that the freedom to speak and act is a crucial aspect of what it means to be Palestinian in Greece.<sup>13</sup>

#### Palestinians without legal status and the realities of living 'in-between'

The realities of hybridity are often especially difficult for those Palestinians who are refugees without legal status from Lebanon and Palestine and who have only recently found themselves in Athens. They live lives that are 'in-between' but unsurprisingly, they appear to feel more insecure, vulnerable and threatened than other Palestinians living in Athens do. Many are 'in-limbo' or in a 'no-man's land', separated from friends and family with little means to keep in contact with them. The undocumented refugees interviewed live in extremely dire poverty and overall, seem to have very little control of their lives. Most seem trapped living a miserable existence, dependant on help from fellow wealthier Palestinians and Greek charities. I spoke to some members of a large group of around thirty Palestinians who live together in a large basement room, without adequate or satisfactory kitchen and bathroom facilities; some have been living in this way for close to a year. For them, home is a long way from their present situation. Hala, a young mother tells me in broken English, as I sit on the rugs on the floor next to her and numerous children of different ages, which make up the sleeping area: "here is not our home, Palestine is home". When I ask her why she left, she replies: "very hard there, too difficult".

Yet, the situations in which such Palestinians find themselves in Greece also seem to be very hard and they feel torn from their home in Palestine as a result. Moving away from their home is seen as a necessity or necessary evil, a means to an end; a better life and a new home in terms of location but not emotionally or psychologically. As Tarub, (39, unemployed) who has been living with her three boys in one room for months, explains: "things are hard here, but hopefully we will not be here forever; there it was difficult too, but at least it was home".<sup>14</sup> It appears that Tarub has a brother in Athens, which is why she came here in the first place. Like many other refugees in her situation

---

<sup>13</sup> The issues surrounding feelings of empowerment within diasporic spaces are discussed in Chapter Seven.

<sup>14</sup> As Tarub did not speak English or Greek, an interpreter had to be used to speak to her.



though, she prefers to try and move to another Western European country, in her case, Germany, where she has another brother. Those who want to move on are also destined to remain without legal status because they perceive that legal status would necessitate applying for asylum in Greece, and thus permanent residence. Therefore, movement and exile, in particular, can make people feel extremely powerless and perhaps lost.

For these Palestinians, movement has been an unpleasant if necessary experience and although it could symbolise or create new opportunities and a better life, this does not always happen in reality. One must also not forget, however, that they too are involved in dynamic cross-border networks as they move, as they also negotiate 'Palestinian-ness' in relation to their current surroundings. The fact that they have made it to Greece illustrates their potential ability to move and although living and feeling 'in-between' may be particularly hard because of their economic limitations, one should not automatically perceive them as passive victims. As they seek to make a living and get used to life in Greece, they may position themselves in hybrid, strategic and ambivalent ways. As Petronoti points out (personal communication, July 2003) in light of her research on Eritrean refugees in Athens, 'integration' or contact with Greece and Greeks is inevitable. As a result, even mundane, everyday acts such as shopping, contribute to and can, therefore, be seen as important contributions to their situated and dynamic perceptions of who they are as Palestinians in relation to each other, to Greeks and to their homeland.<sup>15</sup> For example, Tarub's anxiety that her fourteen-year-old son is taking drugs and "is up to no good" with his new friends (who appear to be mainly of Arab or African origin) also illustrates the difficulties involved in such 'integration'. However, as she and her two younger sons (who do not go to school) often have no money and nothing to do during the day, they often go for long walks around central Athens, getting used to their immediate environment in the process. One of Tarub's main observations as a result of these walks is how different the squalid conditions and area in

---

<sup>15</sup> Thus, even those who are the poorest and potentially most excluded and marginalised may create hybrid spaces in which to make sense of living 'in-between'. Their accommodation, their meetings with other Palestinians, Arabs and so forth, walking around, dealing with charities such as *Médecins Sans Frontières* and *Doctors of the World*, with their Greek employees, can be seen as diasporic spaces in which they are negotiating themselves as Palestinian in Greece. At the same time, it is within such spaces that physical and material cross-border connections between themselves and their homeland may be tenuous but strong symbolically and mentally.



which they live are to the 'better' areas of central Athens, such as around Kolonaki and Syntagma.<sup>16</sup> She is also acutely aware of her family's own poverty in relation to the affluent Greeks she sees. She is also aware that there are many Palestinians who, unlike her, are wealthy as it is they who donate food and money to her family.<sup>17</sup>

Specific positionings of 'Palestinian-ness' and dealings with Greeks are illustrated further by my experiences with Nafeesa, a young pregnant Palestinian woman. Whilst accompanying her to various charities, it becomes apparent that she is using her knowledge of the legal system to portray a particular construction of herself in order to potentially make life better and easier. Although it is clear that the man who accompanies us is her husband and father of her children, she represents herself strategically to the charities as a single Palestinian mother from Gaza (with all the connotations and associations this might raise) who is in Greece on her own completely and in need of immediate help. This is despite the fact that she and her family do not intend to remain in Greece and her consequent negative reaction to the suggestion by the Greek Council for Refugees that she should claim political asylum. Indeed, as has already been noted, most illegal Palestinians interviewed do not wish to remain in Greece, but see it as a stepping-stone or gateway into Western Europe where some have relatives (also see Papadopoulou 2003 on similarities with Kurdish refugees). This appears to be because they do not like it in Greece, find it hard to live and get a job there and because the asylum process is seen as being extremely long, complex and difficult. For those refugees without legal status still 'on the move' then, home may be where they have come from, but also where they aspire to be. At the same time, all Palestinians who move (and perhaps particularly those who do so illegally) do so in the hope that their lives will improve in some way, or that they will be able to help their relatives and homeland more if they do. Going back eventually may also be a dream to which they aspire.

---

<sup>16</sup> Syntagma is one of the central squares in Athens; Kolonaki is a wealthy suburb of central Athens.

<sup>17</sup> Tensions surrounding perception of such undocumented Palestinians are presented in Chapter Five.



### Home and 'in-between-ness' as problematic

Palestinians in Athens may not describe their feelings of home and belonging as 'hybrid' *per se*, but they often reveal that they feel 'in-between' in some form or other, which can be seen as related to the cross-border connections they have. This can have varying material and emotional repercussions for them. Mustafa, (42, unemployed) for example, who has lived in Greece for over seventeen years, discusses his feelings of home and belonging:

Liz: Where do you feel your home is?

Mustafa: *I feel that I am in two pieces; that I am here and there. My presence here in Greece is out of necessity. I don't have so many opportunities here. There are restrictions for me and I have many problems and difficulties. And when things are difficult they affect you and how you feel about a place; they affect you psychologically. You start thinking: what makes me different? Why am I being treated like this? And because you feel pain you can understand other people's pain and all the injustices of the world.*

Liz: So you feel in-between?

Mustafa: *My home is in Palestine. I grew up there with Palestinian culture all around me. The first things you learn and that influence you are from your immediate surrounding environment, from the people around you. At the moment I'm searching for my future. There, in Palestine, there is no future at the moment. You can't live your everyday life with ease. Unexpected things happen all the time. You never know what's going to happen. It's very insecure. But at least I know that I have somewhere, somewhere to bury me. It was never my plan to stay here, but I am here at the moment so I have to live and get on with my life as best as I can. But as I said before, it is very hard. I do odd jobs; I don't have a steady job despite the fact that I have been to university and it's very difficult for me to find a job and get IKA [social insurance for employees] and I am unemployed at this moment in time. I do feel very financially insecure, but here, Greeks do help. I have friends who help me to find jobs. Something*



*will come up, but I would prefer something stable. Luckily my brothers and sisters help me out. It's so frustrating applying for jobs. Although I speak Greek, language is always an issue and they will always choose Greeks over me."*

Mustafa aptly sums up the difficulties of living 'in-between'. He feels his home is there in Hebron because he grew up there, yet his life is in Athens at the moment whether he likes it or not. He, therefore, seems caught between the two. Abdul, (28, casual office worker) also from the West Bank displays similar tensions:

*Here, life's not easy. It's not as good as I expected it to be. It's difficult to make money, but the situation is better than there I suppose, but I'm not always sure about that because at least there, it's your country. Your parents are there. It's your homeland, where you grew up. It's a balance really. You have to appreciate that both places have their good and bad points. Here, it's easier to find a job, but here you are always a foreigner.*

Perceptions of home are seen as important by Palestinians in Greece important because they signify where they can 'feel at home', feel safe and above all, belong and not feel like a foreigner or overly different. This is an important point for those Palestinians who feel that Palestine is their home. The idea of Palestine as home can perhaps heighten or enhance feelings of being 'in-between' because of the refusal to let go of a place where a person feels their proper 'home' is. At the same time, despite being in a positive environment, as they are in Greece, on the whole such feelings prevent Palestinians from feeling they are fully participating in Greek society.<sup>18</sup> Even if they do feel at ease in Greece, it is often with a heavy heart and for many, guilt is a major issue and another aspect of living 'here' and feeling connected to 'there': "I do feel guilty, yes. The people there are suffering a lot, much more than me, that's true and it's hard to be away from my family" (Abdul). Ghada (32, housewife) has similar

---

<sup>18</sup> Such feelings are also linked to the lack of acquisition of Greek citizenship that is commonplace amongst Palestinians in Athens.



feelings: “I always feel guilty, all the time – even in the happiest moments of my life I feel guilty”. Palestinians in Greece perceive themselves as lucky compared to many other Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and around the refugee camps in the Middle East. Their guilt is also a continuous reminder that they are in Greece living a reasonably comfortable life, whilst many fellow Palestinians are not.

Feelings of home and belonging as ambivalent are problematic for many respondents, even for those who have been in Greece for over 40 years. Despite such ambivalence, many Palestinians in Athens see the maintenance of connections to the homeland (and the Middle East in general) as important, as a way to ensure continued feelings of belonging to Palestine. For example, Tariq (60, doctor) who despite saying that he does not feel like a foreigner in Greece, explains that:

*I have my family here. My parents are not alive, but all my brothers and sisters are there and I feel that I have to go there – I go every year to Jordan to see my relatives, to have contact with them and to see them, not because I want to see Jordan. I don't want to lose contact with them; I want to feel that I belong there as well, not just in Greece. As time passes and if you don't go to where you came from or used to live, then things change and you will end up saying that you only belong here.*

Bilal (33, FCE) also portrays this inherent ambivalence. When asked where he feels his home is he says:

*For sure I would like to go back.*

Liz: But where would you say your home was?

Bilal: *I understand but let me tell you an exercise. If somebody were to take all my clothes and put them on the road, this means that I am out of Palestine and this is how I feel. Because I have lived in Lebanon and grew up there and now I*



*live here, okay, but I like to say that Palestine is my land, that it is my grandfather's land.*

For others, such as Tamara (32, researcher), feelings of home, belonging and hybridity appear to be a part of life that they have accepted or come to terms with. Like Tariq, she is married to a Greek, but unlike him she often travels back to Gaza and has only lived in Greece for 6 years:

*My first home is in Gaza... I do feel at home there. My family is there and they love and support me, but my second home is here. Because I have lived there, I know the reality of the situation because I have seen it and experienced it. I am now starting to feel that I belong here but I've never felt like a foreigner although I have language problems. I do feel both here and there. I feel at home in both places. We have restrictions etc but at the beginning it's always difficult. When I was doing my PhD I was alone in the sense that I was working alone so it made it difficult to integrate and it delayed my learning the Greek language, but after I finished, I felt more stability and I stayed to feel more integrated, but I would have liked it to have happened quicker.*

Tamara is lucky enough to have material and concrete connections with Palestine in terms of visiting often, something many Palestinians in Athens do not have. This also seems to have made her less insecure, a feeling a large number of Palestinians experience, particularly if they have been forced to move or have experienced difficulties. Faeq, (45, FCE) who originally came to Greece from Lebanon, has lived in Greece for over 15 years and who has also moved around the Middle East, stresses that he does not feel that Lebanon is home because of the way in which Palestinians are treated there. Likewise, he does not feel his home is in Athens. Instead, he stresses that:

*I have a homeland and a home in Palestine. I came here originally for 2 years and I have stayed for 15. My identity is problematic. What does living here do to your identity? Mmmm, I think it's insecurity that plays a large role, the issues of where to go, where to settle – or where you can go and where you are able or*



*allowed to settle, like for example, my parents had to go though. They have been travelling and moving around their whole lives. When you get to a certain age, you want to build a home to retire in – god knows where I will retire.*

Exile and hybridity can instigate insecurity, as well as provoke extreme unhappiness, especially for those who are not allowed to go back. Haleef, (55, embassy official) whose last visit to his home in Qualquilya was in 1976, vividly describes his emotions:

*My mother died and I couldn't go to her funeral, my father died and I couldn't go to his funeral. I have sisters I haven't seen in years...how much can I endure? How long can I talk to you like this and not show anything. How strong can I be and how long can I be a rock that doesn't understand? How can I be happy in my relations with the Greeks, for example? I have Greek families who are friends, who love me as I am their child and I feel this as well. ...If they allowed me to come and go, maybe I wouldn't have this bitterness inside me, which through the pressures of work and my dealings with people, does not show and is not expressed. But it exists inside me though. There are times when I'm in my car and I hear a song which you know could be Greek; it doesn't have to be Arabic and this song or a line from this song can make me start crying on my own and you would look at me and say what's wrong with this person? Although 10 minutes before I was laughing. Because you know this is inside me. It's always in me and it weighs me down. So many years of feeling this injustice, however much you say never mind, I'm putting up a struggle, inside you there is always this bitterness, sadness.*

Feelings of grief, loss and suffering are often problematic and intense for Palestinians living in Athens. On the one hand, they can strengthen feelings of attachment to Palestine (and perceptions of solidarity with the Palestinian cause) materially and metaphorically. On the other hand, such feelings are also painful and hard to deal with on an everyday basis. According to Jamila, (20, student) “I, who have never lived there, feel much more intensely the Palestinian blood that runs through my veins. Because I haven't lived there, it's much more intense for



me”. Therefore, separation and exile can breed very strong feelings of belonging. At the same time, however, Jamila’s perceptions of home are very difficult for her to deal with. Later in the same interview, she says: “Where is my home? (silence) I feel that inside me, there’s a metal, which has 2 ores in it. There are two things inside me, Greek and Palestinian...I can’t say I’m fully Greek, because I feel more Palestinian than Greek, but I also feel both Palestinian and Greek. I have to remember Palestine because it’s like an open wound”.

In the small basement flat Rafiq (40, restaurant worker) shares with another Palestinian man, he shows me the few photos he has of his family that he has not seen for over twenty years. The photos look much-handled and are a reminder for him of times when he was with them. He says he often sits and looks at the photos, remembering how different things were then. His vision of Palestine as his homeland as nostalgically remembered, may be momentarily static and unchanging as he looks at the people in their 1980s clothes and hairstyles in the photographs. At the same time, however, his weekly phone calls to his family in Gaza and his role as eldest brother and person to whom his younger sisters look to for advice, support and decision-making (despite his absence for over twenty years) have made him acutely aware of what is going on there. With a good command of Greek, and numerous Greek friends, he admits his ‘Palestinian-ness’ is flexible in the sense that although he always feels Palestinian, he strategically represents himself as “more Greek than Palestinian” when he feels it is necessary. At the same time, despite the fact that he enjoys life in Greece, he also feels that there is always sadness or a “weight” in him as part of him “is always there, whether I like it or not”. He feels that since the beginning of the second Intifada, he has felt “more Palestinian” and started associating and meeting more Palestinians because he felt it his duty to do so.<sup>19</sup>

We can see how difficult (and impossible even) it is to arbitrarily separate cultural, social and political elements within Palestinian lives, feelings, experiences and actions in Greece. Rafiq’s inability to go back to Gaza because

---

<sup>19</sup> As a result, although he says he has always been politicised, his current perceptions of his ‘Palestinian-ness’ are even more politicised and more likely to be coupled with political activism. For example, he has personally helped injured Palestinians brought from Palestine to hospitals in Greece and he has spoken to numerous Greek radio and television programmes on what he calls the “Palestinian question”.



of his former PLO actions and affiliations coupled with his extremely ambiguous legal and citizenship status have made him construct his 'Palestinian-ness' to suit his current situation and adapt successfully to life in Greece, yet at the same time feel very ambivalent about where his home actually is. At first glance, it appears to be Palestine, the Gaza he left behind all those years ago, but he likes his life in Greece and he does at times feel Greek and that Greece is his home. This is something he does not want to easily or readily admit:

*Sometimes (Pause)... I do feel Greek and that Greece is my home – I have been here so long but I know that's wrong because I am Palestinian and I do feel Palestinian too but it's hard not being there. I want to be there so much but at the same time, it's good here. I will go back one day, I know I will. I must believe it, we have to have hope that a solution will be found, but here I must do what I can.*

Rafiq also believes that his PLO connections will ensure him a high position when he finally does return and in a way such wishful thinking may be the manifestation of his insecurity and ambivalence in Greece and of his need to remain connected and be 'as Palestinian as possible' in case of such a return. For him, the few important objects he carries around with him serve to remind him of what he has left behind and of where he is now and of the cross-border connections he has. The same can be said of all cross-border networks and of possessions such as key rings and broaches, t-shirts and badges with the Palestinian flag, kuffiyas worn round the neck as scarves that form tangible and embodied links to Palestine and that are symbolic, culturally and politically.

Many Palestinians in Athens own such items and carry them around either visibly or discreetly. At the same time, they may drink frappé<sup>20</sup> when they go to a café, eat at Goodys or Everest<sup>21</sup>, they may speak a mixture of Greek and Arabic, eat a mixture of Greek and Arabic/Palestinian as well as international food, smoke Greek cigarettes and so forth. For example, Muslim families may have Christmas trees up because of the fact that they are in Greece. As Walid,

---

<sup>20</sup> A frappé is an iced coffee drink very popular in Greece.

<sup>21</sup> Goodys and Everest are both Greek owned fast food chains.



(35, FCE) despite his staunch belief in his 'Palestinian-ness', points out: "I know I'm not Christian, but having a tree at Christmas is a Greek thing and I am living in Greece now, so why not?" Feeling 'in-between' often involves mixtures, the merging of different 'cultures' and 'customs' in different and particular ways; there is clearly no 'set' way to feel Palestinian in Greece and it can be a positive and negative experience at the same time.

For some Palestinians in Athens, the notion of home may be an unhappy and fruitless thought that they try to block out. Mahmud, (24, student) who has lived in Greece for just under 6 years, explains with great honesty:

*You do feel that in some way you do belong here because at that moment your life is here, so what can I say? In the time I have been here, I have gone to Palestine for a total of 30 days...I have been two times in total...when you're here for 4 years continuously and I didn't have much contact with Arabs here, then you do start to feel that you belong here, but when you go back, you get confused. So from the first time that your feelings for your country, you start to feel confused and when I came back here, it took me 2 weeks to recover from the atmosphere and the experience of being back there and to forget because there is a law here. If you want to live and stay here in Greece, you have to forget everything there.*

Liz: What do you mean?

Mahmud: *I mean that if you start thinking about your friends, your relatives, you will find life here very difficult and you will start thinking oh I wish I was there right now with such a such a friend doing such a such a thing and these thoughts start to torture you because you feel that you want to go and do it at that moment in time and when some opportunities arise to go there you would go ignoring important things that you have to do here and you will go there and you will get lost. Me, now that my brother has come here and we've been talking, I've told him that he has to forget everything back there and sometimes I forbid him to talk to his friends there and I said to him, that's enough, you will cut links with*



*them and your friends will be my friends that I have here and from now on you live here and that's how it is.*

For Mahmud, home needs to be seen in a realistic light. Although he also feels Palestinian and that Palestine is his 'true' home, his immediate environment in Greece takes precedence within his everyday life, out of necessity. This highlights the importance of home as material and bounded in Greece despite symbolic and physical connections to Palestine.

### **The use of domestic space and symbolic artefacts in constructions of 'Palestinian-ness'**

Feelings of 'being Palestinian', home and belonging are intimately connected to the house as a domestic (and gendered) material space. This research has found that Palestinians in Athens use their domestic possessions and spaces materially and symbolically to connect them to Palestine. In the process, they are actively positioning themselves between 'here' and 'there' through their domestic spaces and cultural artefacts. Tolia Kelly (2004) has written about the importance of cultural artefacts and re-memory within the processes of identification amongst British Asians. She argues (*ibid.*: 317) that possessions within the home

*operate as material nodes that symbolize, refract and resonate with the diaspora journey; they are connective markers to geographical nodes of identification. Through their prismatic nature, 'other' lives, lands and homes are made part of this one.*

For Palestinians in Athens, the processes of negotiating 'being Palestinian' that occur within domestic spaces are complex and ambivalent. Their houses may be seen as hybrid spaces, in which the 'here' and the 'there' come together in an uneasy yet original co-existence. The objects and actions within these houses signal a creative, but also necessary, mixture of memories, traditions, stories and places.

It may be tempting to view the home as a 'homeplace' (hooks 1990), in which 'identity' may become reinforced through spatial practices and



performances, such as ‘national’ or religious celebrations (such as Nakba day, Christmas Day or Eid for example), the collection and display of Palestinian cultural artefacts or through raising Palestinian children. However, the house must not be seen simplistically as a space in which Palestinians are passively creating or reinforcing a stereotypical ‘identity’.<sup>22</sup> If we are to understand the house and ‘Palestinian-ness’ as ‘in-between’, symbolic conceptions of domestic space as assertion of self and ‘identity’ have the potential to become problematic as they may reinforce differences and a homogenised ‘culture’, ‘identity’ and specific (and more acceptable) ways to be Palestinian. Such conceptions could be seen as a form of resistance to colonial occupation and destruction of Palestinian ‘identity’. Advocating a distinct and definable ‘identity’ that can somehow ‘be solidified’ within spaces and people’s lives appears to hold appeal for those who feel they have been marginalized and oppressed, such as Palestinians, for example. This does not mean, however, that we should uncritically accept such constructions as necessary or accept them as ‘reality’, but focus instead on the dynamic spatial and temporal constructions and subjectivities that are occurring.

#### The use of cultural artefacts and possessions within the house

The material and symbolic use of objects and possessions in articulating ‘Palestinian-ness’ changes over time and space. As Karmi (2002) points out, objects that have become and are emphasized as core symbols of Palestinian culture were not seen as nearly as important before 1948. The “caftan”, for example, had been the “badge of peasant identity” (*ibid.*: 23). Yet, “this despised peasant costume would become a symbol of the homeland, worn with pride by the very same women who had previously spurned it. In exile, it became obligatory for each Palestinian woman to have her own caftan”. For those who are married and have children, home becomes even more significant as many Palestinians believe that upbringing and living in a Palestinian environment are crucial to family life. Many Palestinian homes are visibly Palestinian and often

---

<sup>22</sup> The processes of ‘identity politics’ and politicisation within the house, which can become a political space in the process, are complex and are discussed in Chapter Seven. As has already been noted, it is often difficult to separate out the political, social and cultural facets of ‘Palestinian-ness’. The same applies to the symbolic and material spaces they occupy and are engaged in.



Arabic too, and there are both discreet and indiscreet ornaments, flags, maps, pictures and so on that are a constant reminder and link to Palestine. As Karmi (2002: 24) explains: “it has become usual for well-to-do Palestinians [who live in Europe and America] to display...embroidered cushions and hangings in their lounges and to explain their origins at length to visitors”. This is not only to display the fact physically that they are Arab and Palestinian but also allows parents to feel that they are bringing up Palestinian children in a Palestinian home; the two appear go hand in hand.<sup>23</sup> The home is, therefore, often associated with Palestinian tradition and culture and in some cases, an essentialised Palestinian ‘identity’. Lindholm Schulz (2003: 178) describes how objects and ornaments “authenticate and certify the fact that you are in a Palestinian home”. (Said 1986: 58) also states that:

*Many Palestinian households in the diaspora ...recreate Palestinian homes in the way they decorate their houses. For example, with pictures and models of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque, posters of Yasser Arafat, embroidery, pillows, plates with mother-of-pearl. Palestinian flags and other cultural and national ‘icons’, people build little Palestines in their homes.*

Said (1986: 58) stresses that “we keep re-creating the interior – tables are set, living rooms furnished, knick-knacks arranged, photographs set forth – but it inadvertently highlights and preserves the rift or break fundamental to our lives”. As Faeq, (45, FCE) for example, points out some old black and white photographs of Jerusalem in his living room, he laments the present situation, in which Jerusalem does not belong to the Palestinians and that he does not live in Palestine.

Possessions in view at home may be a problematic and constant reminder of a political, social and cultural situation that Palestinians are not happy with but they can also be a positive, if sometimes emotional part of Palestinian lives in Athens. Abir (38, Arabic teacher), for example, is keen to show me an old but

---

<sup>23</sup> The politicised teaching of children to be ‘Palestinian’ is discussed in Chapter Five.



enlarged black and white photograph of her father of whom she is evidently very proud. She explains that he was involved in fighting the British in Palestine in 1936, after which he was forced to leave; from the manner in which she describes him and his actions, it appears that he was fairly influential at the time. In her sitting room, she notices me looking at an impressive piece of contemporary art that hung above her fireplace. She explains that it represents the diversity of the Palestinian people and is an image that she particularly likes and that gives her strength. Therefore, constructions of 'being Palestinian' and of Palestinians themselves as diverse are what she can relate to, as she also admits to "sometimes feeling Lebanese as well as Palestinian" because she grew up in Lebanon.

Art is also something Samira (38, artist/housewife) is enthusiastic about as she discusses the pieces that hang in her living room. She analyses one painting in particular, which is divided into three different large rectangular canvases. Bright reds and oranges depict buildings on the top and bottom halves of the canvases. In the middle part of each canvas, in between the buildings, there is a space, which for her, portrays the separation and feelings of 'in-between-ness' between two places, 'here' and 'there'. Samira feels that "her identity and creativity go hand in hand". Her perceptions of her home are hybrid and problematic. For Samira, home is a space in which she feels torn but that at the same time, has allowed her to express herself creatively, illustrating how her exile has made her feel. The house can be a material space in which Palestinians can 'feel at home' in because it symbolises the home they feel they have in Palestine. As such, it may be 're-creating the interior' (Said 1986). At the same time, the house is influenced by different and dynamic understandings of Palestine through time and space, leading to a complex variety of cultural, social and political identities and actions.

The house also acts a physical space that is used to counteract feelings of transience, instability and insecurity for many Palestinians in Athens. Thomas argues (1997: 97) that the house can be a secure and insecure space. As a result, it can be seen as one that is positive and negative. Therefore, the home, as a domestic, private space can appear to provide security, sanctity, stability and familiarity to people 'on the move'. At the same time, since the home they have



created is not where they would like it to be ideally, it can also be a source of despair. Yet, for many Palestinians, it provides the backdrop or backbone of their lives and 'Palestinian-ness'. It is their own Palestinian space where they can talk Arabic, eat Palestinian food, socialise and so on. The house forms the space where the family can gather, where relatives can come and stay and according to Lindholm Schulz (2003: 172) "the family has been the major remaining institution to which to turn to for some kind of stability and security."

#### Home as a gendered space of 'identity'

Domestic spaces appear to encourage particular strategic and gendered understandings of what it means to be Palestinian. For example, the house appears to be where many Palestinians interviewed show others that they know how to be 'good' Palestinians and where they carry out many of the 'customs' that they feel are Palestinian. Ibrahim (32, construction worker), for instance, is very eager to explain that his Palestinian family have a certain way of doing things; they have Palestinian "habits" as he calls them. By this, he means that:

*there are certain ways of acting towards each other and their relationships...for example, if a stranger comes to my house, first my wife has to be decent. For a man it doesn't matter what state they are in, but for a woman it does. The women should be in one area and the men in another – this is how it should be.*

Despite male views such as Ibrahim's, it is Palestinian women (who often remain at home while their husbands are at work) who appear to have a large role to play in such constructions of 'Palestinian-ness' as it is traditionally their job to raise children and look after the home. The home, therefore, as a gendered space and the effects this may have on individual, family and group perceptions of 'being Palestinian' must also be considered. For Dwyer (2002), the practice of 'making home' (drawn from the work of Hall 1996) serves as a framework for understanding how young British South Asian Muslim women negotiate their identities on an everyday basis. She argues that 'home making' plays an important role in the politics of identity making (*ibid.*: 187) as hybrid and postcolonial in the sense that it unsettles dichotomies such as 'here' and 'there'



allowing the complexities of positioning to be realised. Such reconceptualisations of home and the processes of creating personal and political spaces of belonging are potentially very useful. For Palestinian women in Athens, 'home-making' means they are involved on an everyday basis in connecting the 'here' to the 'there'; they are articulating what it means to them and their families to be Palestinian grounded in Greece but linked to Palestine. This ranges from cooking Arabic and Palestinian food and sweets, putting up artwork or cultural objects that are symbolic of Palestine and their forced exile to raising Palestinian children and speaking Arabic at home. Such acts do not appear to equate to stereotypical reinforcements of Palestinian 'identity'. Rather, they can be seen as attempts to make sense of diasporic life in exile and cross-border connections to Palestine.

The perceived role of the woman and the importance of maintaining a Palestinian home abroad may be why many single Palestinian men in Athens (especially those who work for foreign companies) will actively seek to marry Palestinian women. Often their families in the West Bank or Gaza or around the Middle East locate 'suitable' young women who will often be from the same place of origin and social class. This is precisely because women are often seen (mainly by men) as central to the making of home and of the maintaining of home for their husbands and families. In reality, however, creating a sterile and 'pure' Palestinian home in Athens is impossible, despite some attempts to do so.

Palestinian women can be seen to be influential in determining the family's positionings of hybrid and strategic 'Palestinian-ness'. However, this can also be seen perhaps as them carrying out a male stereotype of what is expected of them.<sup>24</sup> Perceived this way, they are still subordinate to men who may judge them based on their domestic attributes and how 'Palestinian' their family is. As Ibrahim (32, construction worker) notes disapprovingly about a fellow Palestinian: "now his wife, she is more Greek now and look at their children, they feel more Greek than Palestinian and it is because of her. She

---

<sup>24</sup> The relationships and power relations between women and men may have crucial implications for social, political and cultural constructions of 'Palestinian-ness'. Although these matters are of great importance (and could form the subject of further research), they are beyond the scope of this thesis (apart from occasional brief references to them). For more on this in reference to Muslim women see, for example, relevant entries in Falah and Nagel 2005).



smokes, she is always with her Greek friends, going out”.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, I notice that he speaks Greek to his own son and when I question him about this, he looks distinctly uncomfortable and admits he finds it problematic: “It is a problem, but he is learning Greek now but he is also learning Arabic; he will go to a Greek school so he must also learn Greek”. In addition, although he himself wears a traditional kalabia or long-sleeved garment, his own wife prefers western clothes, which he also appears to find difficult to deal with. His discomfort may reveal that although he wants his child and family to remain Palestinian, he is grudgingly accepting his material life and its consequences in Athens. It is hard for some Palestinians and their families in Athens to come to terms with change and their immediate (Greek) environment; as outlined earlier, negotiating hybridity is not always easy. Incidentally, a discussion with the woman Ibrahim refers to, Sunya (31, housewife) reveals that she is happy and comfortable with her life in Greece and the fact that she and her husband have Greek friends and relations.

Although women may be perceived to be in charge of the home, often what happens within it constitutes negotiations between husband and wife and other members of the immediate and extended family. For example, it is Khalid 43, (self-employed garage owner) who cooks the falafel for me after my interview with him and his family and it is he who arranges them on a plate for me in pitta bread with salad. It is then also he who asks his wife, Sunya (31, housewife) if she would cut fruit for us all. Yet, in another house I visited, the husband, Bilal (33, FCE) apologises for what he felt was inadequate hospitality: “my wife normally deals with these things and the food, so I’m not really sure where things are”. Men are also just as likely as their wives to try and ensure that their children speak Arabic, or that they are aware of their ‘roots’ and belonging. It is difficult, therefore, to come to conclusions about such relationships and power relations within the home here. Men may be just as influential at trying to shape their family’s sense of what constitutes ‘Palestinian-ness’.

Rania, (38, FCE) her family and the house they inhabit, provide a good example of the realities and difficulties involved in ‘home-making’ and

---

<sup>25</sup> The realities of tensions and constructions of difference and consequent tensions are discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.



negotiating their 'Palestinian-ness'. During her interview, Rania is keen to stress the role of conservative and very religious Muslim Palestinian women in Athens. They, in her opinion, are bringing up their children in much too strict and religious a fashion and have been influential in persuading other women to adopt the same highly religious lifestyle and values.<sup>26</sup> Rania, as a Christian, feels very differently and stresses the fact that as Palestinians living in Greece, they have to be aware of their immediate surroundings. It also bothers her that they are representing and depicting Palestinians in such a way and she feels that differences in religion, which (according to her) have never been a problem before are beginning to create rifts and difficulties. Interestingly Rania puts this increased tension she feels is occurring down to the increased availability and possession of Arabic satellite channels, which she feels are influencing these women. As she stresses: "they think they are there when they're not". She appears to be indirectly acknowledging the fact that living in Greece has meant necessary adaptations and 'fitting in' to a certain extent. At the same time, she and her family still feel very Palestinian, a feeling that may have been reinforced by the fact that she has her elderly mother staying with them. Incidentally, the only things her mother can say to me in English are "Palestine good, I miss Ramallah...Jewish people very bad". Rania is also keen to stress how great she thinks it is that they are all living together and how her children are able to hear stories of Palestine from their grandmother at their family home. This echoes the re-telling of 'Palestinian stories' of exile and displacement from generation to generation, which many Palestinians in diaspora feel are crucial ways for them and their children to remain connected to Palestine. As Lindholm Schulz (2003: 172) notes:

*the family has...had an important task to fulfil in constituting the primary source of storytelling and thus reproducing the implications of the nakba as well as the image of the homeland...the task of telling the history of the catastrophe and of life as it used to be in Palestine has belonged, first and foremost, to mothers and women.*

---

<sup>26</sup> I tried to interview one of these ladies but it proved impossible as she never returned my calls.



Rania's family existence appears to be hybrid - a mixture of 'here' and 'there'. While their house is not decorated in an overtly Palestinian or Arabic manner, she has a large collection of books and material on Palestine and the Palestinian cause and they all clearly speak Arabic. At the same time, the family appears happy and settled in Athens; they all speak Greek, as well as English and the fact that Athens is clearly part of their everyday lives is reflected in how Rania talks about herself and her family. Therefore, in line with Dwyer's (2002) observations, Palestinian houses and processes of 'home-making' can often be seen as hybrid or a mixture of 'here' and 'there' that is both symbolic and material.

## Conclusions

Lindholm Schulz (2003: 177) points out that: "everyday life and concerns appear to replace both the dream place of Palestine and social relations defined by that place". Living and feeling 'in-between' involves such strategic positionings in order to deal with displacement and separation from one's homeland. Negotiating home may then become a subconscious and conscious survival strategy (Lindholm Schulz 2003) and a way of adapting to daily life in Athens as best as possible by 'picking and choosing' elements of 'here' and 'there' as necessary, but also randomly and in disjointed ways. As Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (1999: 139) point out:

*Exile does not mean the total separation from your place of origin but is rather a condition where one never abandons the old nor completely accepts the new. It is not a state in which one can become completely comfortable and secure. Rather it is a state that hones your skills for survival.*

Although many Palestinians do feel 'in-between', they may negotiate their 'Palestinian-ness' in a way that "represents a fluid use of cultural styles and norms" (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 198). This may be a way to come to terms with the fact that although many feel Palestinian, their everyday life is grounded in Athens. This, as illustrated by numerous examples above, may not always be



easy or straightforward to do. For Palestinians in Athens, negotiating hybridity and being in diaspora with the cross-border connections this entails are mixed blessings. Such connections allow them to survive in Greece and potentially to integrate, to participate culturally and socially and at the same time to keep all avenues to Palestine open. Above all perhaps, it allows them to be adaptable and flexible. They have no choice but to make the best of their current situation.

The majority of respondents appear to feel that Palestine in some form is their home and that they belong there. In such a context, it may be useful to think of perceptions of home and belonging as integral to (material and symbolic) spaces and networks that connect and 'ground' Palestinians, but that are also potentially problematic. These feelings may appear strong but a closer look reveals the reality for many Palestinians is more ambivalent. Such definitions and difficulties illustrate the salience of notions of home and belonging as relational, simultaneously bounded and unbounded or as situated, in motion and in-between. Palestinians in Greece have to continuously negotiate their own complicated and liminal understandings and realities of the home as a lived everyday and material experience. At the same time, many appear to articulate the notion of the home as an often idealised, more static, bounded and politically strategic and symbolic 'Palestine'.

The loyalty to Palestine many Palestinians have is, perhaps, a manifestation of the inherent insecurity those displaced often feel. Loss and exile are often perceived as leading to fragmentation and vulnerability, yet at the same time, particular grounded conditions (such as the support of the host country and people, a crisis in the homeland and so forth), as well as cross-border connections that change over time and space can alter perceptions of home, belonging and 'Palestinian-ness'. It is these constructions, that may take on new much more powerful meanings and become symbols and constructions of 'shared consciousness', the homeland, 'unity' and 'solidarity', which are the subject of Chapter Five. The temptation to view and analyse such Palestinian negotiations as static 'identity politics' needs to be avoided. Constructions, representations and performances of politicised 'Palestinian-ness' and difference are contested and replete with tensions and conflicts. This, in turn, can strongly influence the political thoughts, commitment and actions of diasporic



Palestinians in Athens, which are the broad focus of the following analytical chapters.



## **Constructing strategic ‘Palestinian-ness’: evoking ‘shared consciousness’ and dealing with difference**

The previous chapter explored the importance of home, belonging and hybridity to negotiations of ‘Palestinian-ness’. This chapter develops this discussion by considering the political facets of ‘being Palestinian’ in Athens. The feelings and realities involved in Palestinian evocations of the homeland, ‘shared consciousness’ and ‘unity’ are examined in order to interrogate constructions of nationalism and ‘identity’. In the process, tensions and conflicts over representations and differences are explored in order to illustrate how Palestinians in Athens, far from merging into a defined and stereotypical Palestinian ‘identity’, are strategically making sense of their dynamic, ambivalent and politicised subjectivities.

### **Introduction**

Said (1990: 359) highlights the appeal notions of nationalism and ‘identity’ can have to diasporic peoples:

*Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs and by doing so, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages...all nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement.*

Here, Said appears to accept that constructions of nationalism need a defined territorial homeland, common ‘culture’, language and ‘identity’. Yet, elsewhere he has stressed the importance of recognising the hybrid and diverse nature of what it means to be Palestinian (Said 1986), as well as what he calls ‘extreme’ forms of nationalism (*ibid.*: 2001). Said recognises how nationalism can be exclusive and create us/them relationships that can be very difficult to dissipate



after the “early stages”. What emerges from Said’s work is the problem of how to ensure the creation of potential politicised Palestinian subjects of change (in order to make self-determination and statehood eventually possible) who are ‘united’ or at least possess feelings of ‘shared consciousness’ and at the same time accept and recognise the inherent liminality and complexity of Palestinian diasporic existence (LeBlanc 2002). In relation to such issues, Werbner (2002: 120) has noted that “diasporas, it seems, are both ethnic-parochial *and* cosmopolitan. The challenge remains, however, to disclose how the tensions between these two tendencies are played out”, which is partly what this chapter attempts to do.

Lavie and Swedenburg (1996: 12) respond to such tensions in the following way:

*essentialism is a political necessity, particularly when the group or culture is threatened with radical effacement. Hybridity therefore does not appear to be a viable strategy for Palestine.*

Implicit in such political statements is the perceived need for the creation of ‘unity’ and ‘solidarity’ and the establishment of a stable Palestinian ‘identity’ with concrete ties to the homeland. The role that diasporic Palestinians are felt to play in such constructions of ‘national identity’ and ‘unity’ must be noted. Turki (1994: 160) comments that “our name was born in exile, not the homeground”. Said (1990: 360) also feels that “Palestinians...know that their own sense of national identity has been nourished in the exile milieu”. Therefore, experiences and realities of exile and statelessness can be seen as playing a crucial role in political articulations of what it means to be Palestinian in diaspora.

The need for politicised constructions of Palestinian ‘unity’ and connections to Palestine may explain why some Palestinians in Athens seem convinced that there is no Palestinian disunity or disharmony: “We have our problems, but we are united. It’s Palestine united” (Sa’id, 25, student). Such a view is also portrayed (perhaps unsurprisingly) by Haleef, an official at the embassy. He compares the Kurdish case to the Palestinian one. The Kurds, according to him:



*don't have a base or a platform which unites them all. All the leaders do what they want; they go down their own separate roads. There is no Kurdish PLO. We have Unions; we are united. They have Unions that belong to all the different groups and leaders...they are not united. There is no common ground that unites them all...it has nothing to do with embassies. It's not our embassy that unites people; it's the PLO.*<sup>1</sup>

The PLO has been a key player in the construction of narratives and discourses that have become meaningful to Palestinians in diaspora and it seems that the purpose of such narratives has been to try and unite diverse and dispersed Palestinians around a Palestinian 'identity' and the liberation of Palestine (Bowman 2003). For example, Khalidi (1997: 195) claims that the PLO have succeeded in using what he calls a "narrative of failure as triumph", as an effective tool for political mobilisation, centred around Palestine and self-determination. Another such narrative can be clearly seen in the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, constructed by the PLO on 15 November 1988. In it, the careful and strategic use of notions such as the homeland, history, liberation can be seen as attempts to justify and solidify the existence of the Palestinian people and consequently, a Palestinian state on Palestinian territory.<sup>2</sup> Such attempts to create feelings of 'solidarity' may be why the Palestinian diaspora is often seen as playing a crucial role in constructions of a 'national identity' and belonging. However, one could also see such attempts to create and solidify a united Palestinian 'identity' as discourses and dominating narratives that drown out alternative voices, visions and diverse 'Palestinian-ness'.

### **Political constructions of 'unity', 'identity' and the homeland**

The Palestinian embassy in Athens appears to encourage specific constructions of Palestinian 'identity' as resistant and 'united' through its advocacy of the Palestinian cause. For example, it supports writers whose books promote the cause and predicament of Palestinians in Palestine in certain ways. In 1988, for

---

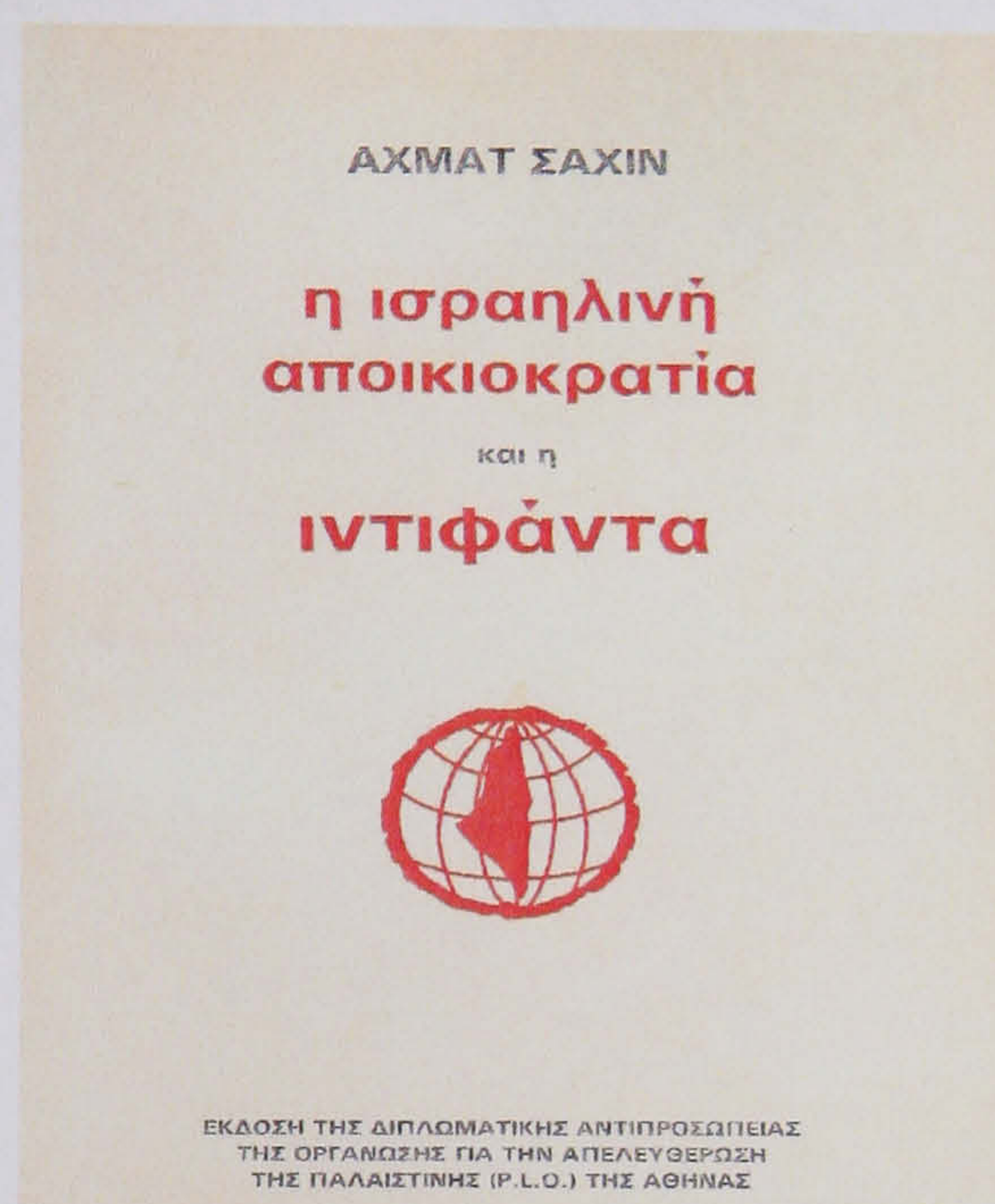
<sup>1</sup> The embassy as a diasporic space is discussed in Chapter Seven.

<sup>2</sup> An in-depth analysis of it as a discourse is beyond the scope of this thesis. It can be found at [www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/documents/dec\\_independence.html](http://www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/documents/dec_independence.html).



example, the ‘Diplomatic Representation of the PLO in Athens’, as the embassy was then called, published a book by a Palestinian called Ahmad Sahin titled ‘Israeli Colonialism and the Intifada’ with a prologue by Fwad Al-Bitar, the head of the ‘Representation’ at the time, which ends with the sentence: “Resistance until victory” (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8 - Front cover of the book titled ‘Israeli Colonialism and the Intifada’**



(Source: Sahin 1988)

The symbolic outline of historical Palestine appears, a highly charged and apparently meaningful image to Palestinians in Greece and one that stresses the highly political role of such books. The embassy, as a political actor, also has a large role to play in how the Palestinian cause is portrayed to the Greek media and public. Therefore, it is not surprising perhaps, that in 2003 a book titled ‘Palestine: It’s not just land’ was published by a Greek journalist called Hristos Halazios in what appears to be close cooperation with the embassy. This book is filled with images of Israeli aggression and Palestinian resistance (see Figure 9).



**Figure 9 - Images of the Intifada**



(Source: Halazios 2003: 1, 41)

The beginning of the prologue in this book echoes the one described above. Its first lines consist of a quote by Palestinian poet, Tawfik Zayiad:

We fill the prisons  
with pride  
we create children  
the resistance generations  
one after the other

(quoted in Halazios 2003: 2, my translation)

On the back cover, a list appears of ‘Laws – copies of Nazi ideas’ that Halazios claims Zionists in Israel are guilty of. Such books appear to stress the image of Palestinians as resistant, defiant, but also as victims and oppressed. They also illustrate the close networks that exist between certain Greeks and Palestinians who are actively involved in advocacy.

Werbner (2002: 121) stresses the importance of understanding the political as well as social and cultural elements of diasporic existence that may be imagined and played out collectively and individually, arguing that:

*diasporas are not simply aesthetic communities; nor are they merely reflections of the displaced or hybrid consciousness of individual*



*diasporic subjects: on the contrary, diasporas are usually highly politicised social formations...connected by ties of 'co-responsibility'.*

For Palestinians in Athens without official PLO affiliations, being Palestinian often means being politicised and collectively unifying around belonging to Palestine, as well as the cause and in some cases appear to reflect official discourses of Palestinian 'identity':

*We have to be united, not only in Greece, also in Palestine, okay there the situation is different, but outside Palestine, we have to be really united because outside Palestine, we have only one duty. A personal duty and a general duty. The personal duty is to be a good person so that you represent your country in a good way. The general one, I have to speak to people, to tell them about the truth, I think this is my duty, something I can do to help Palestinians.*

(Layla, 38, FCE)

Layla's use of the word Palestine signals her use of it as more than just a symbolic home. Palestine is her territorial homeland, the material land where she feels she belongs and that she feels unites her with all other Palestinians in diaspora but also in the West Bank and Gaza. This is despite the fact that she has never been there. As Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 39) point out:

*Remembered places...often serve as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people. This has long been true of immigrants who use memory of place to construct their new world imaginatively. "Homeland" in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples.*

The homeland, as a political construction, that is both real and imagined is a place where the relationship between people and their 'proper' place is naturalised (Kempey 2002: 117). Thus, the salience of concepts such as "collective memories" (Said 2000), language or collectively imagined 'identity'



become apparent as ways to encourage dispersed peoples to focus on belonging to an area of land that is invested in symbolically and politically. For many Palestinians, constructions of ‘shared consciousness’ are usually seen as important in attempts to unify them. For some respondents, for example, unity is the result of a shared language first and religion second (Islam) (Sana, 34, housewife). For many participants, notions of shared ‘culture’, language, ‘traditions’ and so forth seem to form part of such larger political narratives centred around nationalism. This appears to be mainly because of the associations between ‘national identity’ and citizenship within a defined territory (a future nation-state). This may explain why the majority of Palestinians interviewed spoke of ‘Palestine’ as though it were a fully established country. Palestine as the homeland could be said to be a substitute for the nation-state in the case of many Palestinians. It is the land that is longed for, on which to found the Palestinian state (and all the rights and protection that citizenship is supposed to guarantee for its citizens) and where relationships between ‘national identity’ and citizenship can be encouraged and formalised.<sup>3</sup>

Feelings of a shared ‘identity’ can be triggered in numerous ways. For example, Khalidi (1997: 194) has argued that certain events, such as the Nakba and its ensuing trauma and dispossession have “cemented and universalised a common identity”. He also points out (*ibid.*) that “If the Arab population of Palestine had not been sure of their identity before 1948, the experience of defeat, dispossession and exile guaranteed they knew what their identity was very soon afterwards: they were Palestinians”. The feeling that the Nakba and the suffering and injustices many Palestinians perceive it spurred often forms part of constructions of what it means to be Palestinian. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Palestinians in Athens perceive themselves to be a ‘community’ of suffering, exile, and dispossession: “while, *we* are suffering, *we* will remember” (Bilal, 33, FCE, italics added). Sana (34, housewife) also stresses: “All Palestinians have lost someone they know, so they will remember. You cannot forget, the future generations will see the photos of those lost. You don’t forget your own blood”. In this way, ironically, their problems are seen as

---

<sup>3</sup> Perceptions and constructions of the relationships between ‘identity’, citizenship and a territorial nation-state are discussed in Chapter Six.



their strength, in the sense that it is their problems that are potentially uniting them, which explains why they also tend to see themselves a group that is resistant.<sup>4</sup> Abir (38, Arabic teacher) exemplifies such perceptions of injustice and consequent importance of ‘unity’ when she responds to the question of what makes her feel Palestinian:

*My family and the situation there, the fact that I was born there; that I am from there originally, that my parents are from there and the unfairness, the injustice there, that there is always something wrong with the situation. This injustice against my people and me always nags me; it's always on my mind. It bothers me so much; it's hard to forget or block out...The thing is there is this obsession when you don't have a country, when you can't go back and when you feel that you and your family had something that was taken away from you which makes Palestinians even more united and makes them feel that they are Palestinian even more. If all this is solved, you won't have this; it won't be the same.*

For Abir, it is clear that Palestine as the homeland forms the centre stage not only for her own narratives of injustice and displacement but for Palestinians together, as a ‘united’ whole.

In a similar fashion to Khalidi above, Said (1994) uses the example of the battle of Karamah in March 1968 to illustrate how such an event manages to create in Palestinians a sense or a feeling of discontinuity in the place of what was once a void. He claims that to be Palestinian is to rediscover how to be Palestinian: “And the difference between void and discontinuity is crucial: One is inert absence, the other is disconnection that requires reconnection” (Said *ibid.*: 8). According to Said, for Palestinians, a connection between past, present and future social, cultural and political times and spaces is needed. Such reconnections between ‘here’ and ‘there’, colonial and postcolonial, appear to be seen as prerequisites to action, resistance and ultimately to change. This may be why Palestinians in Athens perceive connections between Greece and

---

<sup>4</sup> Such perceptions seem to resonate with the PLO's use of the “narrative of failure as triumph” outlined above, in which negative hindrances to the cause are used in positive ways.



Palestine, but also between Palestinians as so important. When asked what she feels unites Palestinians, Fadila (30, housewife) says:

*Identity and religion. We are a community of people who feel that we are Palestinian and that we are from the same place. We all want the same thing – a Palestinian state. And moving around, living in the West...you feel that you are different.*

Many respondents appear to believe that ‘identity’, ‘unity’ and political action need to go hand in hand. Yet, they also realise the inherent problems in this. As Jamal (34, FCE) points out: “it is very difficult. Even if we have different opinions ... we have to be united because of the situation we are in – there are enough problems without people disagreeing and having different opinions.” Layla (38, FCE) also outlines this in her own thoughts on ways forward in terms of political representation and participation, highlighting the ability and the need of both to make things easier for Palestinians. In response to a question on whether she feels Palestinians are united, she says:

*Yes, but Palestinians are always having problems amongst themselves. All these years that we have had problems with the Israelis, our blood is always boiling. My brother, for example, has problems with his brother because of the roots that we have inside us and these problems we have don't let us ever be at ease. This problem with the Jews – everyday, they kill 1, 2, 3 of our people and this has deep consequences within us, so this is why there are always problems between us because we have been so deeply affected by all these problems. Politically, everyone has their own opinions and come from particular political streams. One is al-Fateh and the other is whatever.*

Liz: Yes, it seems very complicated.

Layla: *Yes it is. There are many political issues. This is why, we as Palestinians have not managed to make many any significant steps all this time. This is the problem. We don't have a common goal. Each person wants to fight for what he*



*believes in. Recently, we have managed to achieve some common goals, but you see, like Jihad doesn't want to do this, Hamas doesn't want to do that. The Palestinian Authority wants something else, so there is no common opinion and this forces us apart as Palestinians as a people.*

Liz: But within any group of people there will be differences surely?

Layla: *Yes, but our differences are strange. We do need to find some common ground though.*

Other participants also construct 'unity' as synonymous with the Palestinian cause but do not necessarily find diversity and fragmentation problematic: "We have a common cause. We have many different opinions, but along general lines, we agree on things. Our identity is very important to us" (Mustafa, 42, unemployed). Other Palestinians also recognise their own diversity and feel that 'unity' is not about 'being the same' but about supporting fellow Palestinians. Faeq, (45, FCE) for example, feels that "socially, Palestinians are scattered and diverse, but they are all supportive of each other". It is comments such as these that illustrate what 'shared consciousness' may actually mean to many Palestinians in Athens. Both men makes it clear that there are differences amongst Palestinians and that they are diverse, yet at the same time Mustafa, in particular illustrates the strategic and political use of the cause (and indirectly of Palestine as the homeland) and of 'identity' to constructions of 'unity'. For Mustafa, 'identity' is not about conforming, but about agreeing on what it means to be Palestinian and on notions such as the cause for political reasons.

The emphasis Palestinians place on the symbolic reconnection to Palestine outlined by Said (on page 147) above is crucial to their diasporic existence. Such connections can have positive and negative implications for Palestinians in terms of security/insecurity, hope/despair, and attachment/separation. Networks to the homeland help most participants feel 'Palestinian' and potentially 'united' but at the same time, can instigate feelings of hybridity that have been seen as detrimental to their cause. This is why



notions such as ‘national identity’ or ‘long-distance nationalism’ (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001; Skrbis 1999), with their emphasis on territorial attachments, may appear to hold great appeal for those in diaspora. However, they may mask and inadequately describe the processes and feelings of ambivalence, confusion and ‘in-between-ness’ groups such as the Palestinian diaspora in Athens appear to be undergoing.

This is why the idea of ‘shared consciousness’ may be a more suitable description for such processes. It invokes the feelings of shared and remembered times, experiences and spaces (such as the homeland, the Nakba and exile) many Palestinians in Athens can undoubtedly relate to and find important. At the same time, because of its loose association with territory, ‘culture’ and ‘nationalism’, it can become a more dynamic, flexible and open-ended notion than ‘national identity’. It thus invokes the idea that people in diaspora negotiate multiple and hybrid positionings as well as feelings of belonging in response to their immediate surroundings because of their evolving ‘in-between-ness’ and cross-border connections, as both individuals and groups. As a result, collective thoughts and actions that may occur are not seen as essentialised or stable. Rather, they are seen as constituting situated and strategic processes that may be disjointed, empowering and/or disempowering.

The notion of ‘shared consciousness’ does not assume that there are bonds between people that are steadfast and unchanging but that such ties do exist and are negotiated at specific times and spaces for particular reasons. As such, it also allows for the existence of power relations and struggles as well as tensions over representation and differences between groups and individuals in diaspora. It may then be possible to understand the complex workings and tensions of individuals belonging to a group trying to make sense of their changing ‘Palestinian-ness’ within the context of ‘here’ in Greece, whilst at the same time perceiving that self-determination and statehood ‘there’ requires a stable and historicized ‘identity’.

### **Learning to be Palestinian**

A good way to aid the discussion on the grounded, politicised and strategic nature of ‘being Palestinian’ is by exploring a perception that many Palestinians



in Athens seem to share. This is the notion that children have to be actively ‘taught’ how to be Palestinian from an early age. The importance of such concepts is the implicit understanding and realisation that ‘Palestinian-ness’ and ‘shared consciousness’ involves political, social and cultural constructions and positionings (and that may pose as or feel like an ‘authentic’ Palestinian ‘identity’) to which all Palestinians can relate. Thus, ‘being Palestinian’ can be something that is ‘learnt’. For example, Tariq (60, doctor) explains: “In 1948, I didn’t understand what being a refugee was...It was here, when I met other Palestinians, that I woke up and realised...that my homeland...was Palestine, that I was Palestinian...my eyes were opened here”.<sup>5</sup> In the same interview, he also talks about the fact that he has lived in Greece for over thirty years and has to actively ‘remain connected’ to his homeland and his roots as he feels he is becoming ‘more’ Greek over time. For him, being Palestinian (and married to a Greek woman) is an active process. He is positioning himself continuously between ‘here’ and ‘there’, the past (that he has left behind but that is part of his present political imagination) and the future, as he tries to make sense of what ‘being Palestinian’ means (and will mean) to himself and his Greek-Palestinian children.

#### Teaching children ‘identity’ and the Palestinian cause

The contextual nature of ‘Palestinian-ness’ is crucial to understanding the Palestinian diaspora (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 199). As has been pointed out in Chapter Four, ‘being Palestinian’ is not straightforward or necessarily easy for Palestinians in Athens and it is often difficult to distinguish between the political, social and cultural aspects of what it means to be Palestinian. This could explain why many Palestinians interviewed feel that being politicised is part of their everyday lives, as Mahmud (male, 24, student) explains:

*Palestinians are very politicised. Ten-year-old children know more about politics than adults. They grow up with politics; their whole life is politics.*

---

<sup>5</sup> Incidentally, Tariq went on to become politically active within the GUPS soon after he came to Greece.



*Anything that happens has to do with politics. War, unemployment, death, marriage, everything and it's good.*

Mahmud is indirectly stressing the political significance of children being politicised. It is they, as the next generation, who are seen as responsible for keeping the Palestinian cause alive. As Faeq (male, 45, FCE) notes, “they are the key to the future... the next generation will be more committed”. The upbringing of children and an instilment in them that they are Palestinian appears to be an investment for future political advocacy of the Palestinian cause and it is not seen as something to be taken lightly. Thus, the teaching of children to be Palestinian is an inherently political act and duty as well as an integral part of ‘being Palestinian’. As Layla (38, FCE) stresses:

*If you are a good person, you will raise good Palestinians and a new generation...also I have to tell my children about Palestine and if I am a good Palestinian I will.*

As I was interviewing Layla, her 8-year-old son appeared and sat with us for a while. She said: “Ask him, ask him about Palestine, he knows everything. I’ve told him everything; he knows where he is from”. Layla has purposefully taught him her version of what it means to be Palestinian, but this does not mean that her son will feel the same way that she does. He was born and has been brought up in Greece and now has Greek citizenship. As a result, he is dynamically negotiating ‘being Palestinian’ in response to many different factors, such as his mother’s perceptions, his Greek surroundings and the international school he attends. Despite her attempts to teach him her understandings of ‘Palestinian-ness’ and her need for him to feel Palestinian, she admits that having Greek citizenship will be good for him and her own feelings of ambivalence, insecurity, ‘in-between-ness’ hope and disillusionment have undoubtedly had an impact on her son’s ‘identity’. Many parents appear to feel they are teaching their children their own versions of ‘Palestinian-ness’ and that their children will somehow become replicas of themselves. As Abir (38, Arabic teacher) points out whilst



talking about her daughter, “She feels she is Palestinian because I am Palestinian”.

Such teaching of ‘shared consciousness’ and connection to Palestine in diaspora is far from straightforward or easy, even for Palestinians married to Palestinians:

*Ahmed: ... now this with our kids, we are really facing problems, when it comes, lets say, like now with the Olympic games, they say, why don't we see Palestine? They go to the school, Nabil, who is 9 years old, they have posters, flags and maps of all the countries and he was searching for the Palestinian flag and he never found it and then what he did was he drew it on a piece of paper and stick it there. He got approval from the principal and he stuck it there together with the other ones; he was feeling bad about it.*

*Maha: He put this issue of identity –*

*Ahmed: The issue of identity is really, we don't, for me, I long to hear our Palestinian anthem, to see the Palestinian flag, we never felt this before and I think our kids are getting to this stage where they really feel...*

Liz: So you are teaching them to be Palestinian?

*Ahmed: Of course*

*Maha: My daughter when she's angry, she says, I hate you, I hate dad, I hate the cat, I hate the house, I hate everybody, but I don't hate Palestine and God*  
(laughs). (Ahmed, 34, FCE and Maha, 29, housewife)

Maha and Ahmed illustrate the difficulties involved in such politicised negotiations of what it means to be Palestinian (and to have a homeland called Palestine) to them, and to their children. Other mothers such as Sana (34, housewife), for example, find such teachings necessary, but difficult at times:



*I teach my children about Palestine, about what is going on there. I let them watch the news and they get scared and they say they don't want to go there. So perhaps it's wrong that I show them, but I want them to know, to see the suffering. And, they have Israeli friends at school and they say mama, but they're not bad as the ones we see on TV, because they don't have guns and I said, when we talk about Israelis, we talk about Israelis inside Palestine, not outside. But they should know that we have enemies.*

Despite perceptions that what parents are instilling in their children is a Palestinian 'identity', it appears to be their own dynamic and situated understandings, experiences and negotiations of 'being Palestinian' that are being passed on. Therefore, they may or may not realise or be aware of (or may choose to ignore) the impossibility of imposing their dynamic, hybrid (and also potentially ambivalent and fractured) constructions of 'shared consciousness' upon their children. Parents seem to ignore that as their 'Palestinian-ness' is being continuously (dis)located, so too is their children's. Nevertheless, one could also see this teaching of how to be Palestinian as an important aspect of parents' own unstable identities in diaspora.

Palestinians married to Greeks (or non-Palestinians in general) may find the issue of teaching their children to be Palestinian even more acute:

*For me, my children and the children of my friends, who are born in Greece and who live here, we need to teach them Palestinian history, to keep them close to the cause, so that they live and understand it, so that we can guarantee that if you generation does achieve our goal, the next generations will be able to. This is a very important job we have outside Palestine.*

(Rafat, 48, FCE and PLO representative in Athens)

As for Palestinians married to other Palestinians, such attempts may also not always be easy. As Sami, a doctor-turned politician explains: "my son doesn't see himself as Palestinian. He doesn't like it when I talk about Palestine and he does not want to go there and there's not much I can do about this; he lives here and his mother is Greek". Other Greek-Palestinian families see things



differently, however. One Greek woman married to a Palestinian man feels proud to be married to a Palestinian – she does not see it as problematic and is pleased that they often go as a family to Palestine because she sees her children as primarily Palestinian, not Greek (Maria, 31, housewife) as this is how they have been brought up. As a result, she is also learning Arabic (as do a number of other Greek women married to Palestinian men). This position (mirrored in other Greek-Palestinian families) may be explained by the popular support of the Palestinian cause in Greece.

Haleef (55, embassy official), a father who is divorced from his Lebanese wife and whose children grew up in Athens describes how he sent them to the West Bank on their own because he is not allowed to go:

*I put them on an Olympic Airways plane, like a package, on their own to Tel Aviv and my brothers picked them up and took them to Qualquilya, where I'm from. I didn't need to say anything to my son or my daughter in order to make them aware or understand the problem. When you send them on their own and the Israelis at 3 in the morning come and knock on the door of our house and they drag out their uncle, my brother and my other brother in order to get rid of the writing on the wall of our house and my brothers refused and they got beaten up and my children woke up with all the shouting and the screaming, you don't need to say many things to them. What are you going to say to the child? What do you need to say? The child, on his own, will make sense of it all, search for answers and an image will be formed in his mind.*

For Haleef, it is very important that his children are seeing and experiencing where he is from originally. Despite the fact that he has been living in Greece for over 30 years, his home is very much there, a feeling he seems keen to pass onto his children. He wants them to know the reality of where they have come from so that they can better understand the political and humanitarian situation there. He is also aware that such a visit will help influence certain notions of what it means to be Palestinian.

The passing on of 'Palestinian' knowledges and information has led, according to Fawaz, (40, self-employed worker) to what he calls a "burden" on



the shoulders of children as young as 12. He feels this is because they are very aware of not only of where they (should) belong and they are living in exile but also of the political situation (or their parents' political thoughts on the situation) in Palestine. At the same time, they have to make sense of 'being Palestinian' and growing up in Greece whether they go to Greek or international schools. Fadila, (30, housewife) stresses she is teaching her children about Palestine:

*so they would not forget where they were from originally...it is so important to educate your children about their culture and where they are from and this is why we want to move back to the Arab world – to be closer to where we come from.*

It is clear that Fadila, as a mother who does not feel at all settled in Greece, (despite liking it as a place to live) feels insecure about bringing up her young children in a non-Arab country. Her efforts to reinforce her children's connections to "where they are from" can be seen as crucial aspects of her own need to remain connected to Palestine and the Arab world. This may explain why Heela, (40, office worker) finds it upsetting that her son and daughter do not know a great deal about Palestine because they have grown up in Greece. When I ask if I can interview them, she appears to make excuses, saying that they are "not politically minded". She seems slightly embarrassed by this and her reluctance to let me interview them (even though they are adults) seems to signal her discomfort and dissatisfaction with the fact they are not as 'in tune' to their roots as perhaps she feels she is and they should also be.

It is important to consider the ways in which Palestinian children brought up in Greece negotiate their identities. Dina, (17, still at school) whose mother is Lebanese, has grown up in Greece. She is ambivalent about where her home is but admits that although she has connections to Palestine through her father, (and because she has visited it) her upbringing in Athens and close ties with her mother (and Lebanon) have diluted her perceptions of Palestine as home and



homeland.<sup>7</sup> Dina is content to live in Athens spending time at each of her parents' homes (they are divorced) and has friends from all over the world as she goes to an international school. At the same time, however, she fondly recalls her father cooking Palestinian food, talking about Palestine and she is proud of the photo of him dressed in military uniform that she shows me, when he was "part of the resistance" in Palestine. Her ambivalence about her 'Palestinian-ness' is evident:

*I've thought about the fact that I am Palestinian but not that much, because I also feel Lebanese. I'm starting to think about being Palestinian more as I get older I think. Sometimes it's hard not to though because of my father and what he tells me about the situation there. But it's not something I think about all the time. Well, I accept the fact that I am Palestinian I suppose, but it's also hard, because I was born here and I grew up here and my friends are not Palestinian. I really don't know actually. I'm really not sure.*

Dina appears to be beginning to acknowledge that she feels 'in-between' and express political feelings that are based on her particular upbringing and immediate surroundings. As discussed in Chapter Four, specific artefacts or possessions, such as photographs, appear very important to constructions of 'Palestinian-ness' and belonging. As she tells me about a project she carried out at school on the situation in Palestine, she explains her satisfaction in being able to find out more about her roots and admits that she has a great deal more to learn. These are actions she feels will enable her to tell people about the historical and political situation in Palestine, something she does not feel confident doing at present. As if to prove her feelings of political awakening and potential to advocate the Palestinian cause in the future, she gives me a book of photography on Palestinians, which she insists I have as they have many copies. What Dina illustrates very well are the complex and often difficult processes of negotiating 'Palestinian-ness' that such children and teenagers have to deal with.

---

<sup>6</sup> Dina's situation has already been mentioned in Chapter Four, where her memories of her visit to Palestine and her consequent perceptions of herself as Palestinian are presented; here the political implications of her negotiations are discussed.



In particular, her testimony appears to aptly demonstrate the merging of political, social and cultural aspects of Palestinian lives, feelings and emotions.

Dina's brother Omar, (20, student) who attends Greek university, appears initially to be very decisive and clear about who he feels he is. He expresses his 'Palestinian-ness' in terms of resistance to oppression and as a student of political science is keen to frame Palestinian issues in the context of 'universal basic rights', justice and UN declarations and resolutions on the right to self-determination. These are all issues that he has specifically researched as he has become older. As our discussion continues, however, the certainty with which he started begins to falter and his confusion at being Palestinian in Athens appears. Although he believes that he should feel Palestinian, he was raised in Athens and the fact that he enjoys his life in Greece is a source of guilt for him, as he feels 'different' to Palestinians in Palestine, even though he clearly wants to be politically active and help Palestinians there as much as he can in the future. However, he is aware of the difficulties (and whether he will want to) of being able to do this in the future. Both Omar and Dina appear to portray the feelings of hybridity and ambivalence outlined in Chapter Four. Here, however, the implications of such 'in-between-ness' can be seen in terms of feelings of politicisation.

Having children in itself can also be perceived as politicised (but also social and cultural) and strategic acts of 'Palestinian-ness'. Bahira, (36, doctor) for example, who has four children, feels that she is contributing to the Palestinian cause by having as many Palestinian children as possible. She has made a conscious choice to do so and it forms a large part of her being and acting as a Palestinian. The reason she is doing this is because she knows that such strategies are employed in the West Bank and Gaza. Although it may appear as if she is blindly 'copying' specific ways to be Palestinian from the homeland, her decision has to be based and situated within her own everyday life in Athens. She is a busy professional, who speaks Greek and has a great deal of contact with Greeks. Her children go to an international school, she is active within the Palestinian Doctors' Union, and has her own specific cross-border family, medical and charitable connections and relations to Palestine, as well as to Greeks and Greece. Decisions such as Bahira's cannot be seen as objective,



isolated actions, but are processes of performing, embodying and re-enacting hybrid and diasporic 'Palestinian-ness' in Greece. The fact that those Palestinians in diaspora who have never been to Palestine and who grew up in exile, either in Greece or around the Middle East often say they feel Palestinian testifies to the appeal such politicised feelings (and teachings) and acts of 'shared consciousness' and belonging hold to them.

### **Articulating and debating differences: tensions and conflicts**

If 'unity' between individuals and amongst groups is seen as being continuously debated and constructed, the reason for such debates is the inevitable diversity and differences between the people involved. The positioning and representations of 'Palestinian-ness' can also be seen as the continuous struggle to deal with differences and similarities over time and space. Valentine's (1999: 57) assertion that "throughout our everyday lives, we constantly negotiate space, positioning ourselves physically, socially, morally, politically and metaphorically in relation to others" appears to ring true for Palestinians in Athens. Therefore, Palestinians have to make sense of their own daily realities, experiences, emotions and actions and those of fellow Palestinians within diasporic spaces. This includes the narratives and discourses of 'Palestinian-ness' created and disseminated by those in positions of relative power such as officials, elites, and leaders but also their own friends, acquaintances and those constructed as 'enemies' (both Palestinian and not). As Werbner (2002: 123) points out:

*diasporic groups are characterised by multiple discourses, internal dissent, and competition for members between numerous sectarian, gendered or political groups, all identifying themselves with the same diaspora...what is subsumed under a single identity are a multiplicity of opinions, 'traditions', subcultures, lifestyles, or to use Avtar Brah's apt terminology, modalities of existence.*

Amongst Palestinians in Athens, conflicts stem from differing perceptions of what it means to be Palestinian in Greece socially, culturally,



religiously and politically. Disagreements on whether Palestinians are ‘united’ in Greece, globally and within the West Bank and Gaza echo Said’s concerns outlined at the beginning of this chapter. These appear to stem from tensions between the perceived need for a united ‘identity’ as a prerequisite for ‘united’ political action (influenced by official PLO discourses of strong Palestinian ‘unity’ and ‘solidarity’) and their own personal, often ambivalent, hybrid and confusing notions of what it means to be Palestinian. To be Palestinian, therefore, is to negotiate all these tensions and articulations of difference on an everyday basis. These are tensions that are acknowledged at times, but for the most part, they form underlying currents that simmer and impact upon actions and opinions subconsciously. This seems to have resulted in some respondents having to negotiate personal fears, apathy, and disillusionment with public and politicised displays of ‘unity’ and ‘solidarity’, in order to advocate the Palestinian cause. As Samira 38, (artist/housewife) explains:

*We have to show a united front to the outside to the outside world. Maybe to you, we will admit privately that we do have doubts and fears, that we feel insecure, but we must not show this to the Greeks or the media. It is important because this is how we get the message of our cause across.*

Many interviewees perceive ‘disunity’ as negative, problematic and counterproductive to the political advocacy of the cause. Constructions of ‘disunity’ also appear to make some of them feel disconnected from each other. Sana, (34, housewife) for example, points out that she is not

*hopeful for unity there – there is too much conflict within Palestinian organisations, so it will not work. It’s the same here. There is internal conflict among us. We don’t know how to be one hand, how to get together. Palestinians organisations are too much against each other. They agree on 2% of things.*

Yet, in the same interview, she says:



*In Greece, we all have the same beliefs. When we meet all together, we talk in one tongue and we are against the Israelis. I don't see people with a different point of view here, we all agree on things.*

There appears to be a tension between admitting that disunity is a reality and portraying Palestinians as resistant and united. This clearly exposes that constructions of 'unity' are purely political in nature. In reality, tensions and conflicts are commonplace and to be expected. It is not surprising, therefore, that Rania, (38, FCE) like Sana above, feels that Palestinians in Athens are not united:

*There is unity there [in the West Bank] and it is a pity that we don't have this here. You will not find this unity people have there anywhere else. People help and support each other. This we lack outside, here people are more isolated. Here, people come together temporarily in crises, but it's not sustained.*

Such tensions also manifest themselves in Palestinians feeling torn between depicting Palestinians as united and disunited. Rafat, for example, (48, FCE and PLO representative in Athens) is aware of disunities, but seems very keen to downplay them:

*There are disagreements, disunities amongst Palestinians here. This is to be expected...but I am thankful that despite these disagreements amongst ourselves that we haven't become disunited even though there are intense disagreements. But above all, being united is the most important thing.*

#### Embassy and Union constructions and negotiations of difference

Disagreements and tensions can be seen as emanating from official (and non-official) constructions of differences between Palestinians in Athens. For example, the attempts by the Palestinian embassy in Athens to define what it means to be Palestinian officially may have led to them to try and classify (and control) what they see as distinct groups or categories of Palestinians in Greece and Athens. Haleef, an official at the Palestinian embassy divides Palestinians in



Athens into the following groups. The first is students whom he splits into those with Greek government scholarships about whom “everything is known” and those without, who come on their own. The second is the group he classes as workers, which he divides into those who are self-employed, those who are professionals (mainly doctors) and those who work for foreign companies. He also defines them in relation to the embassy and how ‘close’ they are to it in terms of the contact each group has with it. This seems to be directly related not only to having similar beliefs, but also to need. There are groups and individuals who feel they need the support and help of the embassy and those who do not.

It is difficult to ascertain how willing Palestinian support for the embassy is, as there are claims by some Palestinians, such as Masud (26, construction worker) that the embassy will only support (and, therefore, represent) those who have similar beliefs to it. This seems to be a potentially dominant (and influential?) way in which those in positions of power in Athens are articulating constructions of Palestinian ‘identity’. In the absence of a country and, therefore, of a ‘proper’ embassy, the existing embassy may have taken it upon itself to define the ‘Palestinian-ness’ to which Palestinians in Greece ascribe. It is, therefore, an important and powerful political actor and the officials in charge seem to be some of the most significant ‘gatekeepers’ of Palestinian ‘identity’ amongst the Palestinians in Athens. Unlike other embassies that should support and help all their citizens regardless of their political beliefs, the situation in Athens may be that support is linked to political belief.

A group that appears to have continuous contact with the embassy is the GUPS, who work closely with the embassy. However, even their relationship is not without conflict because of differing beliefs on representing what it means to be Palestinian. The discussion with the Nisreen, the President of the Union illustrates this:

Liz: So the Union has a close relationship with the embassy?

Nisreen: *Well, we're not the same, we're different, they can't tell us what to do and we don't tell them what to do, but we are independent, even when they say they want to help us, we say okay we are independent.*



Liz: So they don't interfere?

Nisreen: *Well, they like to tell us what to do, go there and go here and do that, because of that we tell them what we want to do and what we don't want to do.*

Liz: So what do they tell you to do?

Nisreen: *You know sometimes, e.g. the Dima<sup>8</sup> of Kriti, they give us an invitation to go there and they give it to the embassy and they tell the Union that we need them to come on that day to do something and they have like a paper which will help us with that, maybe we go sometimes and we do everything and okay we say we are from the Palestinian embassy, it's the same because both the Union and the embassy are Palestinian, but we like to say that we're from the General Union of Palestinian Students.*

Liz: So, they try to make you represent the Palestinians here?

Nisreen: *Yes. There's also other Unions from other countries, like from Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, but they're like 2 in the Union only and they're with the embassy, they have their offices in the embassy and they are not independent, they do whatever the embassy tells them to do, if the embassy doesn't like it, then they don't do it. We are different; we are not like that. You know sometimes, there are events which we get involved in such as the anti-racist festival, but the embassy doesn't like that because there are gay groups there and they don't like to be associated with those things, but we don't have a problem so we go, we don't have a problem with black people, with white people, gay people.*

Haleef, the embassy official sheds some more light on the role the embassy plays on reconstructing 'unity' and official versions of 'Palestinian-ness' (as well as dealing with representations or beliefs that threaten this 'unity'), when he discusses the embassy's relationship with the Unions that exist in Greece:

---

<sup>7</sup> Municipality of Crete.



*It's not necessary for the Union to agree with me and we don't require them to do so and I don't have a problem whether they agree or disagree with me. What interests me is that they respect the rules and laws of the country that they're in, that they do not create political problems for the country. I may argue with them and they may argue amongst themselves and we'll discuss things and our different viewpoints, but they should portray the official political image that we have to the Greek people. You can't as a doctors Union lets say, go out into the streets during a demonstration and swear about Arafat. You can express a different political image. They can say that they have a different political opinion, it's a personal matter but to begin to create problems – this we don't allow and they respect that. Also, don't forget that the constitution of the Palestinian Unions states that these Unions are politically affiliated to the PLO; in other words, politically they have to be PLO. The PLO, as you know has all the organisations. It's a mixture. It has whatever you want in it. One organisation may have its different viewpoints or its disagreements. All the groups, however, agree to the decisions made. So, in reality, you are tied to the political standpoint of the PLO and you express your differences as the Democratic Front or the Popular Front, like I don't know Ba'ath, whatever you are. However, the politics you pursue and that you follow is the politics of the PLO. And this makes things easier for us. If, at the present time, the Palestinian issue is to survive, resist, be politically relevant and to be listened to in the International Community, by the Europeans, the Americans, we have to be united.*

The embassy also seems to have been involved in a curious and complex problem regarding the creation of a GUPW in Greece. A brief description of it follows to illustrate the tensions evident between the parties and individuals involved, which seem to boil down to differences in political beliefs. It has to be noted that this cannot be an official record of what happened, as it was very difficult to ascertain exactly what was going on and who was telling the truth. It was, therefore, a problematic situation to follow and one that was easy to get caught up in as interviews were carried out with both 'sides' that consequently



developed. According to Issam, the Leader of this Union (53, interviewed in June 2003):

*We thought about creating a Union of Palestinian Workers in order to help on two levels. The first is to ensure that the workers are getting their rights and the second is the Palestinian Cause. We are interested in uniting diaspora Palestinians behind a movement to create a Palestinian state. This is very important to us for the following reason. Other migrants may go to other countries, integrate into them and become fragmented. Because there is a national cause – we have lost our homeland – we have to keep these rights that we have...so we established this Union to protect these people so they don't get lost into Greek society.*

It is important to note that the Union is being set up as a political act, although it is not clear whether it is following PLO politics and standpoints, which as observed earlier in the quote above, Haleef, the embassy official claims is necessary. Several months later, during an interview with Haleef, it emerged that there was a problem with this Union. Apparently, it had been set up illegally, according to one interviewee who had links to the embassy. As a result, a new Workers Union was proposed and the wheels were put in motion to set it up. This is the version of what happened according to those who were involved in this new Union. Those who are involved in the old union have a very different story to tell. According to them, their Union was not illegal. This was a fictitious claim that would enable a new Union to be formed. The supposed reason for this was that the old Union is not overtly PLO affiliated with socialist leanings, but communist and, therefore, an undesirable basis for a Union. Apparently the embassy had a problem with this and instigated the creation of a new Union, one with members who thought along similar lines to their own (and who, perhaps, they could exert influence and control over). The potential for such conflict can also be seen by the Masud's (26, construction worker) view that there are apparently many



*Palestinian workers who go to the offices of the first Union, but will not publicly or officially admit that they do because they don't want to spoil their good relationship with the embassy because they need it to get papers, for example.*

Recurring problems surrounding elections (and indirectly, representation) in Unions (and other diasporic spaces) also create conflict. According to Sa'id (25, student):

*Um, there's a Palestinian Workers' Union but it's not 100 % legal; there was a problem with the election and it's not legal. Now they're forming a new Workers Union. I think they're going to have elections in a month. Of course we're going to have problems. Palestinians always have problems in elections. He may be your brother but in the end you're going to fight because we speak openly. We speak our minds even if it means we argue. Most of the time we stop for a couple of hours to relax and in the end we're all friends. You say what you want to say... the people voting in the elections... decide whether you're right or wrong and whether you get elected or you don't get elected. We have to fight; it's in our blood; that's how we discuss and decide things in elections.*

Sa'id illustrates that the inevitable propensity for tensions and conflicts is high amongst such a diverse group of people. His feeling that they are easily dealt with portrays and is based within Sa'id's own position as politically active and his need, therefore, to construct 'unity' within diversity and potential fragmentation.

At the end of the fieldwork, there appeared to be two Workers Unions, each with similar functions and to this day, there is no way of knowing or proving exactly what happened. The whole situation illustrates the messy nature of situated representations and constructions of strategic 'Palestinian-ness' within diasporic spaces in Athens, as well as the potential for conflicts and power struggles. It provides a glimpse of how groups and people within them attempt to control situations that threaten what they see as their group 'identity'. In the process, it appears that within this particular diaspora, there are those who



are included and those who are excluded because of their beliefs.<sup>9</sup> As Werbner (1998: 12) highlights, diaspora communities can “remain deeply rooted in highly localised struggles”, which are where power inequalities are played out. At the same time, Werbner also notes that this occurs in tandem with the influences of global (and cross-border) factors such as the global mass media. Such observations appear relevant to the Palestinian diaspora in Athens.

#### Non-official constructions of representation and difference

Just as the embassy attempts to officially define the different groups of Palestinians that live in Athens, so do Palestinians themselves. Not only do they define themselves as a group called ‘Palestinian’, they also define themselves according to social, economic, citizenship and religious differences that they feel represent them and as a result, they feel they belong to groups, social circles and spaces with Palestinians who have similar backgrounds or beliefs. Despite the fact that the embassy claims the groups are quite separate from each other, this is a generalisation and in reality, there are connections between people, both physically and mentally. For example, Palestinians in Athens may be linked in some way by the diasporic spaces they are involved in and the other Palestinians they meet there. Some of the tensions that may arise from differences in political beliefs have been examined. There are also, however, many other tensions that may occur as a result of economic, social, religious differences (which are often inter-related) that are explored below.<sup>10</sup>

Palestinians (and their families) who work for foreign companies in Greece seem to perceive themselves in particular ways. When Abir (38, Arabic teacher) talks about Palestinians living in Athens, it seems that in reality she is describing the Palestinians within her own social circles: “Here, Palestinians are united and financially, we are independent so we don’t have to be tied to one group, which is good”. She feels free, financially and politically, which enables her to do what she wants. Above all, she is able to feel this way because she does not have citizenship problems, which as will be seen in the following chapter,

---

<sup>8</sup> Palestinian perceptions of inclusions and exclusions within diasporic spaces such as the embassy are discussed in Chapter Seven.

<sup>9</sup> Differences in citizenship status are discussed in depth in Chapter Six



can have profound impacts upon people's everyday lives. Her perceptions of reality and of those involved with these foreign companies is very different to those who are self-employed or who have married Greeks; an obvious difference is the much higher wages and, therefore, standard of living enjoyed by those who work for foreign companies.

It could also be said that this group's greater access to resources and information has perhaps heightened their attachment to where they have come from originally. According to Dorai (2002), such Palestinians are more realistic and aware, although their social and economic status could also make them more money and business-orientated. This could be why they have been criticised and resented by other less well-off Palestinians for only caring about money and having a good time, "showing off that they have it all" (Ibrahim, 32, construction worker). The fact that foreign company employees also seem to keep to their own social circles may also have encouraged misunderstandings or stereotypes by Palestinians of different class and financial status (and vice versa). However, Rania as a foreign company employee herself also feels that those who work for such companies

*only care about the pleasure of their lives here. That's all they care about. This is why we are not united. We live too far away and some of us are not emotionally connected to there. Plus those who work for these companies are not all the same, we do not all feel the same about things.*

Therefore, there are also social differences amongst those who work for such companies. For example, this discussion with Layla, a single mother who works for such a company illustrates the differences gender can create:

Liz: Do you like working there?

Layla: *It's okay. No, the problem is, as a female, you don't gain much money.*

Liz: Really?



Layla: *Not only in the company I work for, everywhere in Greece, as a Palestinian. The problem, for me is that I am a single parent and as a single parent, I need to be paid as a man because I am supporting me and my son; I have to pay everything. I can't say that I'm happy but thank god I've got a job. It's better than nothing.*

Palestinian men who studied in Greece and then went on to marry Greek women are also seen and see themselves as a particular group. Such Palestinian men (many of whom are doctors) married to Greeks are not free from criticism. According to Ibrahim (32, construction worker):

*These doctors, the people who came a long time before us, I mean there are some Palestinians who have been here over 30 years. They have become Greek now at all levels. I think it's true to say that they have forgotten Palestine. They may have been fighters when they were there but they don't care much about it now, about the problems their fellow Palestinians are experiencing. They care about their own lives. They have forgotten everything. They have forgotten the simple things that mean so much. Greece has changed them completely. For example, I will not ever change certain things.*

Liz: How do you know that the same thing won't happen to you? They probably didn't think they were going to change, or perhaps it happened subconsciously, without them realising, over time.

Ibrahim: *Yes, people do change but it depends on the person and their personality. Those who came earlier, you can differentiate them, you can see they're different at all levels. You know, we in the Arabic countries, we have our own customs.*

Liz: Yes

Ibrahim: *But they do not follow them now.*

Liz: And I've heard that some have married Greek women.



Ibrahim: *Most of them, yes. And they have had children and their children are Greek. They have not got Greek citizenship because they are living in Greece, but because their mother is Greek.*

Liz: But as time passes and you don't go back?

Ibrahim: *Yes, but I'm very careful to maintain contact with my family in Syria. This contact creates links that I could not live without. I guess they have completely lost contact with their families. There are Palestinians who are not Palestinian. They have lost touch completely with their Palestinian past.*

Ibrahim clearly demonstrates the importance of having links to his family (even though they are not in Palestine and he has never been there). As a result, he feels he is 'more' in touch with his "Palestinian past" than other Palestinians are.

Whether Palestinians have lived in or visited Palestine or not can also have implications for the creation of tensions. The following quote by Abdul (28, casual office worker) illustrates this:

*You know the Palestinians who have never lived there, they don't know so much. They have not lived through the problems; it's different for them. They may not understand or know so much because they have not experienced what it's like and they have not seen it. They don't know so many details and realities of the situation. They don't know exactly where the places are or they can't describe them like we can. They are different to us.*

This difference can also be extended as a perceived division between Palestinians who at the moment are 'inside' Palestine (which, for such purposes, appears to be defined as the West Bank and Gaza, not historical Palestine) and those who are 'outside', or where Palestinians are from originally. As Sana (34, housewife) points out:

*You can see the differences coming from the refugees who left in '67 and who never visited Palestine. Some suffered, some didn't. This is the difference*



*between all of us. I have a friend who is from a refugee camp and she says that if people talk, then she should talk, because she believes she has more right to talk more on behalf of, because she says we suffered more. I don't listen, because I say, perhaps she has more right to talk...*

Although the physical lives of Palestinians in Athens are better and they are not in immediate danger, some respondents still feel they suffer psychologically, because of the fact that they live in diaspora. Jamila (22, student) says: "I know it must be more difficult for the Palestinians who live inside; it is terrible for them, but you know we also suffer because we are here; they have to deal with everything on an everyday basis, whereas all we can do is watch and wait". She goes on to claim "I don't feel different to those Palestinians who have lived there. I've spoken to so many Palestinians who have lived there, my love for Palestine is the same; it's just as strong as theirs". Lina (38, businesswoman) also feels that being away from Palestine makes it harder because they are foreigners in Greece, whereas those 'inside' are 'home' at least. She also highlights the perceptions of distinction between 'real' Palestinians who are there and Palestinians who are somehow less real because they live in diaspora:

*I don't know if I can speak like a real Palestinian, because I've never suffered like the people down there, but we suffer in different ways. For example, I always wanted to have my own country because I am always a foreigner everywhere so this gives us a little bit of pain. When I see any Arab celebrating in his country – we don't even have the right to have our folklore, or if we have it, where to show it, so we suffer like that.*

This issue of defining who is a 'real' Palestinian can also create further problems for Palestinians such as Abdul (28, casual office worker), despite the fact that he grew up in the West Bank and has lived there fairly recently:

*My friends tell me off sometimes for not knowing things that have happened or the details of what's going on. They say that I'm not Palestinian if I don't know everything.*



The issue of refugees who are not legally residing in Greece is one that needs to be highlighted here. It is interesting to note the embassy's position on such Palestinians living in Athens. According to an embassy official, there are no Palestinians without legal status in Greece and those who claim to be are pretending to be Palestinian because they feel they will be treated more leniently. This insistence on the absence of undocumented Palestinians appears to be related to the fact that the embassy is nourishing and promoting the image of Palestinians in Greece as law-abiding and legally resident. The embassy does not appear to want to associate itself with undocumented immigrants whether they are Palestinian or not so that this carefully constructed image is not tarnished.

Although it does appear that on the whole, Palestinians in Greece are law-abiding, legal 'resident aliens' with the right documentation, I came into contact with over thirty refugees without legal status who claimed they were Palestinian during the fieldwork. When confronted, the embassy gave its full assurances that they were not in fact Palestinian as they make it their duty to talk to all undocumented immigrants who claim to be Palestinian. It is, as a result, very difficult to come to any conclusions about the presence of Palestinians without legal status in Greece. This insistence on the legality of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens also hides the increasing difficulties Palestinians are experiencing in renewing their documents that allow them to live there legally. This is not surprising given the problems many migrants in Greece are facing in terms of bureaucracy and complicated and ineffective immigration policies.<sup>11</sup>

The presence of Palestinian refugees who are residing in Greece illegally and who often appear to be in a dire situation financially have triggered differing emotions and tensions amongst other Palestinians in Athens. Some Palestinians (mainly women involved in charitable activities) who have heard about them and have visited them are saddened and angered by their predicament: "you can't believe how they are treated" (Sana, 34, housewife), so are moved to try and help them. At the same time, they appear to recognise their own positions as more financially secure and their role in helping those less fortunate than themselves (which may have the impact of lessening feelings of guilt about their own

---

<sup>10</sup> These issues have already been outlined in Chapter One.



financial status). However, other Palestinians who have been in contact with such individuals, either personally or indirectly are critical of them. Some feel that they do not really need as much help as they claim to need (Mohammed, 43, teacher) and others, such as Masud (26, construction worker) are also negative:

*I kept trying to find them jobs. I would tell them to go to a certain place at a certain time and they never turned up. So I have given up trying to help them. I can't understand why they're like this. They should need help theoretically, they should need money, they should need to work, but they don't seem to want to. Plus, they don't want to stay in Greece, they want to move on to Western Europe, but how will they get there? Like this (moves his hand in a zig-zag, to denote that they would do so illegally). They are just waiting here. So, I have come to the conclusion that they must have money, how else would they get here? And they are not refugees from Gaza as they claim to be, they are from southern Lebanon and they have money. But to go to Scandinavia and Western Europe, they need money, don't they? But they want to be here and not work.*

Liz: How do they get money then?

Masud: *They will wait for the Palestinians here to give them money.*

Masud has become disillusioned with them and, therefore, has started to resent them, illustrating the fluid nature of constructions of difference amongst those in diaspora.

### Religious constructions and tensions

Palestinian Muslims in Athens provide a good example of how Palestinians use and negotiate differences and similarities as well as definitions of who they are, in relation to each other. The majority of Palestinians in Athens are Muslim, although there are also some Christian Palestinians. Religion appears to influence certain traditions and customs of Muslim Palestinians, as well as their senses of 'Palestinian-ness'. However, religion seems to be something many Palestinians in Athens 'dip into' or feel at will. Many do not see them themselves



as extremely religious people, but at the same time, religion can form a key aspect of who they feel they are as well as cement links to the Arab world. Above all, they feel that to be Muslim in Greece is to be different, a way of signifying that one is different and that one does things differently.

Some interviewees also perceive that Islam unites Palestinians with other Muslims and Arabs around the world and the Middle East. In Athens too, it provides a way for men to come together at regular intervals, which they do at the numerous underground Mosques that exist in Athens.<sup>12</sup> Knowing about one's religion is seen as very important and many participants are keen to demonstrate their religious knowledge despite claiming not to be religious. Yet, unlike many other European countries, in Greece, religion has not become the basis for so called 'identity politics'. This could be because Palestinians do not see it as a viable or useful strategy. The support that they do receive is based on Greek perceptions of Palestinians as being under occupation as well as the cause. It is not based on religion and many Palestinians are acutely aware of Greek perceptions of Muslims.<sup>13</sup> As the following two interview extracts illustrate, Palestinians are acutely aware of how Greeks have interpreted and represented Islam:

Majid: *I think that religion is very important. I don't think that people realise how important religion is to us. The people here, the Greeks, they don't really understand what Islam is and they don't really care about the world and what's going on. People stereotype Islam. There is no difference between the Christians*

---

<sup>11</sup> According to Tzilivakis (2005b: 3), there are plans for an official mosque and Islamic Centre, which are being funded entirely by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, to be built in Peania (NE of Athens). However, there has been much opposition to this by the Greek Orthodox Church and local residents: "This is one of the reasons why construction has yet to begin. Plans for it were approved by Greek Parliament five years ago, after more than twenty-five years of negotiation. Athens is the only capital in the fifteen 'older' EU states that does not have an official place for Muslim congregational prayer".

<sup>12</sup> Many Palestinians in Athens feel such perceptions are based on the bitter Greek experience with Muslim Ottoman Turks and on what Meinardus (2002: 81) calls the "Greek-Turkish complex", which he feels is "part and parcel" of the question of the Muslim minority in Greece. This is usually seen as a result of the Ottoman occupation of Greek speaking (and Greek Orthodox) lands; Greece, as a modern nation-state, was established at the end of the Occupation from 1821-33 (Close 2002).



*and the Muslims; we originate from the same people but when people know that there is a question mark over it, over Islam, they get suspicious of Muslims*

*Fadila: I hate this stereotypical impression people have of Islam, like that all women wear headscarves or are forced to wear them. I don't wear it and I don't have to as a Muslim woman*

*Majid: And I can't force her to; Islam doesn't say that she has to.*

*(Fadila, 30, housewife and her husband, Majid, 36, FCE)*

*But this and the occupation and the violence has nothing to do with the Islam that is here now and that is believed in by the Muslims here. It does not preach violence – Islam preaches the opposite but probably Greeks still have this image of Islam as violent and the [Greek Orthodox] Church still maintains that they are scared of Islam.*

*(Ibrahim, 32, construction worker)*

Although religion does not appear to be the main factor defining and informing constructions of 'Palestinian-ness', for some Palestinians it is still very important. This seems to be because religion helps them to negotiate themselves as Palestinian, through the maintenance of religious traditions and customs they feel are crucial:

*We keep these traditions and customs. If we don't do these, then we lose our personalities, who we are as Palestinians, our identities. This is our identity there, it is based on such things, these things. So there is this danger for Palestinians living outside Palestine of losing this identity that they have. They slowly forget the fact that they are Palestinian...I'm very worried about my son and the future and what will happen because things do change. But hopefully it will be fine...my generation is different to the older one. They have forgotten everything. We are not like that. We are keeping our traditions and customs...we are thinking and acting as Palestinians so there is no fear that our culture and identity will be lost.*

*(Ibrahim, 32, construction worker)*



Ibrahim's view seems to be focused on preserving as many of these 'customs' and 'traditions' as possible and not becoming 'lost' within Greek society and way of life. Although such views appear to be indicative more of a 'holding on' to an 'authentic' Palestinian way of being and they can, therefore, be exclusive and stereotypical, they exist as strategic constructions of 'Palestinian-ness' for some Palestinians triggered by feelings of exile, insecurity and difference that can be associated with living 'in-between'. Ibrahim goes on to air his concerns about other Palestinians in Athens who are not practicing Muslims like his family or who, according to him, have lost or forgotten what it means to be Palestinian:

*In other European countries, it's religion that unites Palestinians and keeps them together but you don't have that here. Palestinians here have nothing to do with religion but religion is very important. It can influence people not to change their principles but when there is no belief in religion then everything changes. If you change or you get influenced, how do you know who you are? Who are you if you do not stick to your principles and morals? We have every right to be who we want to be and believe what we want to believe and we are not harming anyone. In other European countries, religious groups are much more organised because the Arab communities there are much older and England, politically is different to Greece in that they support religious freedom more. Now here in Greece, there have been steps recently to support different religions but before there was nothing at all.*

Such views also serve to illustrate certain tensions amongst Palestinians in Athens, between those who seek to preserve their own religiously inspired constructions of 'Palestinian-ness' and those who see themselves as more integrated into Greek society. Despite this potential conflict, however, in reality both groups live out lives that are a mixture of both, whether they like it or not.

Religion is an issue that divides as well as unites certain Palestinians in Athens. Palestinians who see themselves as more 'moderate' and for whom religion is important but does not necessarily permeate all aspects of their lives sometimes have a problem with those Palestinians for whom this is not the case.



For example, Rania, (38, FCE) a Christian, stresses her disapproval of what she calls “extreme behaviour” of certain Palestinian Muslim women:

*Recently, since September the 11<sup>th</sup> I think, there have been some women at the school my children go to – in fact, there is one woman who started it all off, saying that all the girls must wear the veil to school and at other times.... people are listening to them, but they are not representative of all the Palestinians here. They are defining their way to be Palestinian, what they think is important, not what the rest of us think. I do not agree with many of their views and attitudes but what can I do? I don't want to create problems.<sup>14</sup>*

Rania points out that in Ramallah, where she is from:

*We never differentiated between Muslim and Christian, never, ever. During Christmas in Ramallah, everyone celebrates. During Ramadan, everyone celebrates. You never felt this tension with the religions, we are all the same.*

Rafat (48, FCE and Representative of PLO in Athens) agrees with her views:

*In Palestine, there are no disagreements between Christians and Muslims. Here too – for example, our children from the Parikia went to Hristodoulou<sup>15</sup> and sang the Christmas carols. Out of 11 children, 8 were Muslim, but it doesn't matter. It's very important to remember that we are open-minded about religion.*

For other Palestinian Muslims, religion is not seen as a way of preserving Palestinian ‘traditions’ or about being Palestinian in a certain way. For example, Nadia (24, housewife and part-time student) tells me why she wears a headscarf:

---

<sup>13</sup> Rania's perceptions of tensions as a result of religious differences are also discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>14</sup> Hristodoulos is the leader of the Greek Orthodox Church.



*I wear it because of my religion. It says that from the age that a girl has her period, she must wear it. You know, it is not such a big deal; many Palestinian women do not wear it but I have been wearing it for 11 years. It depends on where you are from, your background, your family. In some places, many women wear them and it is their decision.*

Nadia does not feel that her headscarf, despite visually depicting her as different, is problematic for other Palestinians or Greeks. She sees her headscarf (and her religion) as a personal choice that she is entitled to practice. As she respects other religious choices and Muslim women who choose not to wear a headscarf, she expects the same in return.

#### Perceptions of Greek support, discrimination and representations of Palestinians

The issue of negotiating similarities and differences is also important in Palestinian relations with Greeks and Greek society. Greek support, sympathy, help and hospitality all have a role to play on individual and group constructions of 'Palestinian-ness'. Palestinians perceive this support in many ways and the following two quotes provide examples of this:

*They believe us and it give us more hope. You remember in 1982, Greece was the only country that received Arafat. When they opened their doors to us, none of the Arab countries allowed Arafat to go, only Greece. This is fact; we can't ignore it. Why don't we do something about it? We are in a really good position here...there's something very good in Greece, that if you want to join the Greek university, there are 3 nationalities that don't pay, Greek, the Cypriots and the Palestinians, this is very good, it's great. I was really surprised when I came here and they told me that. I tell you, I love Greece. Let me tell you something that happened to me a long time a go. I took a taxi to go somewhere and the taxi driver asked me where I was from and he said great, so I reached the place and I went to give him the money and he refused to accept it – he said this is the minimum I can do for Palestine.*

(Layla, 38, FCE)



*I have never felt like a foreigner here, never. Sometimes I get pulled over by the police and when they ask where I am from, I say I am Palestinian and they say Palestinian? Arafat? And I say, yes, I am Palestinian and they say okay, go.*

(Mahmud, 24, student)

Although Khalid (43, self-employed garage owner) acknowledges such support that Palestinians receive, he also describes how Greek perceptions of foreigners have changed over time and how this has affected him:

*I have been here over 15 years and only recently have I started feeling that I'm a foreigner and it's really affected me, it really bothers me now. They swear at us because we are foreigners, just because we are different and it's since the Albanians came. The attitude of Greeks has changed. They judge you just because you look different.*

Khalid's wife, Sunya (32, housewife) also depicts feelings of Greek prejudice, which she finds upsetting: "I went to the hospital to donate blood because I knew they needed blood. But when they realised I was Palestinian, they didn't want my blood. I couldn't believe it". Rafiq (40, restaurant worker), who has lived in Greece for over twenty years, has a similar story to tell:

*I painted this apartment I was about to rent, but when I gave the owner my name, she asked me where are you from? I said I am Palestinian. She then said that she would talk to her son and the next day she said that her son was going to live there, so I couldn't. Before, when I spoke to her on the phone, she thought I was Greek, you see, because I speak Greek so well but when she found out I wasn't she made up excuses so that I wouldn't rent the apartment. These are the sort of things that we have to deal with sometimes, as well as police stopping us in the street as they do with all foreigners and those who look different. This is how it is now. It never used to be this bad. Even though they may support the Palestinians politically, they see us foreigners as all the same, they don't trust us sometimes. It's difficult to be a foreigner here in Greece now, even if you are Palestinian.*



Despite feeling politicised and Palestinian, Rafiq does not want the fact that he is Palestinian to cause problems with Greeks. This is why he feels he is involved in a constant struggle between ‘integrating’ into and respecting Greece and Greek society and negotiating himself as Palestinian with a political cause to advocate.<sup>16</sup>

There are Palestinians who, despite acknowledging the support they have from Greeks, cannot help feeling different or foreign. Suzanna, (37, housewife) a mother of three girls is trying to bring up her children “to respect people as individuals, regardless of their race or religion”, yet at the same time she acknowledges the difficulties she feels she will have:

*We have to set boundaries or limits that they have to stick to and they see that what they are allowed is different to their friends and they say it isn't fair, but on the whole I think they understand why. My sixteen year old, for example, wants to go out to clubs and come back very late or wear provocative clothing because she sees her friends doing so but after I have explained why such things are not acceptable, she understands, but it is hard sometimes, living here.*

Ghada (32, housewife) also displays similar worries: “I will have a problem with my daughter when she grows up, because we are Muslim. When she is 17, 18, she will want to go out with boys and do what her friends do, but we do not approve of such behaviour”. Both women acknowledge the tensions that differences (in their case, religious) can create as a result of their living in Greece as foreigners. Although they are both willing to uphold their religious beliefs as far as possible, they also seem to be aware that their future relationships with their daughters will involve intense and sometimes hard negotiations because they live as a religious minority.

Perceptions of difference are also triggered by representation of Palestinians in the Greek media, which can also create tensions between Greeks and Palestinians. Despite being appreciative of Greek support, some Palestinians

---

<sup>15</sup> Rafiq's feelings of ambivalence and ‘in-between-ness’ as a result of such struggles are discussed in Chapter Four.



also feel that the Greek media does not represent them fairly and actively constructs them as ‘different’ or as dangerous:

*The news that you see here in Greece and I mean no disrespect to the Greeks, but unfortunately some of the channels here, like Mega, Antenna are sold to the Israelis, in other words, the Israelis have a large influence on them and they can say whatever they want through those channels. There is no information – sometimes they call us terrorists, or whatever even though the presenter may disagree with what she has to say, but she has to say it or else she loses her job and this has happened. Three, four months ago there was a scandal amongst the journalists here. They fired 5, 6 journalists from some newspapers who discovered that when they write an article about Palestine, or Iraq, and then send the article to the editor, the next day in the newspaper, they would see another article that was different to the one that they had written. And, sometimes instead of where was written ‘the poor Palestinians’ instead was written ‘the Palestinians the terrorists.’* (Mahmud, 24, student)

As a result of such representations, some Palestinians feel that Greeks are misinformed about the historical and contemporary situation in Israel/Palestine:

*I know that Greeks are supposed to support the Palestinian cause but there are some people who do not know very much and who do not understand. I had a discussion once with a group of Greek students who were saying that Israel was for the Israelis not the Palestinians because of religious reasons – that they could prove that their religion said that they should be there and I was trying to tell them and to prove to them that the land was Palestinian. I said to them give me evidence that Israelis belong there – there is still no hard evidence that they have a right to be there, but the Palestinians were already there, living there. I told them about 1948, how the Israelis came there and forced the Palestinians to leave.* (Karim, 24, student)

Karim who has recently moved to Greece from Jordan (where he has lived his whole life) has never been to Palestine. At the beginning of his interview, he



claims not to feel Palestinian, but as the interview progresses, it becomes clear that he does feel Palestinian and that he is willing to advocate the cause. It also becomes apparent that he has started to feel 'more Palestinian' and to learn more about Palestinian history and the cause since coming to Greece and associating with other politicised Palestinian students.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, his perceptions of himself as Palestinian have also been influenced by Greek attitudes towards Palestinians and their cause. He feels compelled to learn more about his own Palestinian history in order to counter and deal with Greek misrepresentations. The propensity for the creation of us/them relationships may be evident in such testimonies, but at the same time, it should also be clear that Greek and Palestinian subjectivities are inextricably tied as a result of the processes of negotiating differences and similarities both groups undergo during their daily lives. Different levels and kinds of conflicts and tensions exist amongst Palestinians and between Palestinians and 'others', some of which are perceived as very severe and potentially create large rifts and others that are seen as less significant and to be expected. However, tensions must not be over-emphasised; rather they and their consequences in terms of politicisation and political actions have to be explored and understood because they are a reality within and amongst diasporas.

## Conclusions

Lindholm Schulz (2003: 87) claims that for Palestinians, "the condition of being Palestinian...is to move". At the same time, she (*ibid.*: 204) argues that there has been a 'thinning out' of Palestinian identities and of attachment to homeland within the Palestinian diaspora. She claims that this "runs the risk of diminishing the political strength of the Palestinian movement, which is why stories...(of difficulties, disillusionment, apathy, integration and so forth) are kept out of official deliberations on what it means to be Palestinian". Her views and approach appear to equate 'identity' with 'unity' and political action. However, her apparent conflict between the need to construct a politicised and united Palestinian 'identity' as a necessary aspect of the "Palestinian movement" and

---

<sup>16</sup> This is reminiscent of the discussion earlier in this Chapter on 'learning to be Palestinian'.



the realities of multiple Palestinian positionings highlight the tensions ordinary Palestinians in Athens also feel. The conflicts and complexities surrounding 'being Palestinian' in Athens are crucial in depicting how difficult it is for such diasporic Palestinians to deal with personal and official constructions and narratives of 'identity', difference, politicisation, political 'unity', representation and citizenship. Palestinians in Athens may have different loyalties and can act and imagine themselves collectively for strategic or unifying purposes but at the same time, they are unique and diverse individuals with intricate and changing constructions of what it means to be Palestinian in Greece that can be difficult to pin down. Therefore, constructions of 'shared consciousness' may be useful in attempts to understand and explain Palestinian collective attachments and feelings of belonging.

It is important to deconstruct arbitrary notions of Palestinian 'identity' to take into account and explore the ways in which Palestinians may position and construct themselves as Palestinian strategically in political, social and cultural ways. It is also crucial to examine and appreciate how, in the process, they may feel empowered, disempowered, 'in-between' and ambivalent and potentially engage in political activities such as advocacy, within diasporic spaces as discussed in Chapter Seven. At the same time, as Chapter Six shows, the formal aspects of citizenship status (and related issues of security, rights, justice, political participation) as well as the associations between Palestinian 'identity' and citizenship within a future Palestinians state hold great appeal for many Palestinians in Athens. It is such perceptions and realities of citizenship (and statelessness) that also play an important role in the material ability and tendency of Palestinians to feel politicised and be involved in political activities.



## **Perceptions of the coupling and decoupling of citizenship and 'national identity'**

This chapter aims to add another dimension to the discussion on what it means to be and feel Palestinian in Athens. Palestinian articulations of belonging and politicisation have to be placed within personal material realities of statelessness and exile as well as ensuing feelings of injustice, discrimination, suffering and the paucity of a political voice and participation. In this chapter, perceptions of the relationships between citizenship and 'national identity' are examined in order to understand how the Palestinian diaspora in Athens may use symbolic narratives and articulations of citizenship as part of their constructions of 'being Palestinian', and to potentially frame (and strengthen) their cause and related political actions.<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

Migrants and those in diaspora with informal or ambiguous citizenship statuses highlight the need for re-conceptualisations of citizenship, as well as the relationships between citizenship, 'identity' and belonging (Croucher 2004). People who have an ambiguous relationship with the 'nation-state' or who are not 'nationals', a concept that Castles and Davidson (2000: 84) call an "intrinsically particularistic and exclusionary category", are often excluded or discriminated against. The majority of Palestinians interviewed for this research are not Greek citizens but are dependent on work and residence permits in order to live in Greece. This chapter outlines their different legal statuses that are often complicated and unclear. This appears to play a major role in their feelings of injustice, discrimination and ambivalence, as well as their constructions of 'Palestinian-ness', belonging, political engagement and citizenship. For many Palestinians in Athens, it is the physical effects and consequences of non-

---

<sup>1</sup> Material political actions and advocacy that occur within diasporic spaces are discussed in Chapter Seven.



citizenship that they often experience. This may be why many Palestinians in Athens see citizenship as a set of processes that are inclusive and can provide rights, benefits and protection for citizens in defined nation-states but that can also be exclusive for foreigners and those with complex residency statuses and feelings of home and belonging, such as themselves.

Joseph (1999: 4) comments on the importance of citizenship. She feels that:

*While there is no simple definition of what citizenship is, or who can be a citizen, we are constantly impinged on as citizen-subjects, operating between the legal, the cultural and the political, often in tandem, in our everyday gestures.*

Imaginings and realities of citizenship (as well as the lack of citizenship) can thus be seen as a constant part of Palestinian daily lives in Athens, whether they are Greek citizens or not, greatly influencing perceptions of Palestinian citizenship in a future Palestinian state. Although contested, constructions and perceptions of citizenship are crucial components in the understanding of diasporic (individual and group) legal, cultural and political positionings in relation to the state (or states) and to one another. For Palestinians in Athens, articulations of citizenship may influence their negotiations of home, belonging, 'identity' and difference as well as tendencies and abilities to resist, feel politicised and politically active. Joseph's quote also highlights two notions and spheres of citizenship. The first is the idea of citizenship as more symbolic or cultural. The second is citizenship as legal and official (as well as its material consequences). As Joseph points out, these versions merge within everyday performances and constructions of citizenship and belonging. This also seems to be the case for Palestinians in Athens with and without formal citizenship status.

Within Palestinian understandings of future Palestinian citizenship, relationships between citizenship, a territorial state and 'national identity' are often portrayed as 'natural' and desirable. For example, Rafat's (48, FCE) opinion, as representative of the PLO in Athens, is revealing: "We are entitled to an independent Palestinian state. We are entitled to an identity". Many respondents see the nation-state as the provider of rights and access to necessary



resources to its 'ethnically' and 'nationally' defined citizens. This mirrors Tambini's (2001: 196) observation that "the status of citizen has been allocated to individuals according to their 'ethnicity', or 'national identity' ...as the main determinant of access to resources, rights and to the institutions of political participation". This also echoes the discussion that an 'identity' is needed in order to 'unite' as a prerequisite to potential political advocacy of self-determination (as part of the Palestinian cause) outlined in Chapter Five.

In this chapter, the intricacies surrounding participant constructions of the relationships between Palestinian citizenship, 'national identity' and Palestinian statehood are examined. The future state of Palestine can be seen as the space in which they will invest their current perceptions of the relationships between citizenship, statehood and Palestinian 'identity'. The principles of self-determination and the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees, as key aspects of the Palestinian cause, are all based on such relationships and "the creation of a Palestinian land for Palestinian people, where they can be free and have all their rights" (Abbas, 26, student). Thus, to reiterate, Palestinians in Athens appear to be constructing relationships between Palestinian citizenship and 'national identity' in a future Palestinian state.

At the same time, this chapter illustrates that a decoupling of Greek citizenship and (Greek) 'national identity' also seems to be taking place for those Palestinians who have obtained Greek citizenship status. Being a citizen of one country does not necessarily mean that one 'fully belongs' and that one can identify oneself to other identities, which are still state based (Isin and Wood 1999). As Nagel and Staeheli (2004: 4) argue: "it is possible to claim identity as a citizen of a country and to negotiate membership within the bounds of 'belonging', even without claiming to 'be of' that country", thus breaking the assumed congruity between citizenship, state and nation. It is important to stress "the distinction between cultural and national identity" (Welsch 1999: 198). In response to such claims, Soysal (1998: 210, 209) has argued that "the idea of nation becomes insignificant, a mere trope of convenience for claims to collective rights and identity". For Soysal, post-national membership is a more relevant notion, whereby "an identity politics energised by narratives of collective pasts and accentuated cultural differences, becomes the basis for



participation and affords the means for mobilising resources in the national and world politics”. In a similar vein, Tambini (2001: 212) also explains why he feels that the concept of what he calls ‘post-national citizenship’ is becoming more important:

*No-one can seriously propose that the nation as an institutional form is about to disappear. Neither, however, can it continue in the classical nineteenth century form. Rather, the meaning and content of national belonging will be transformed as the structural basis of national citizenship continues to be undermined. Clearly, a strong sense of identity is important for the action, participation and solidarity that citizenship involves. But active citizenship in the future may rely more on bureaucratic policing of belonging than on ‘national’ or cultural identity.*

Such views advocate the reconfiguring and re-thinking of the relationships between citizenship, ‘identity’ and statehood. To this end, Ong (1999: 6) highlights the concept of ‘flexible citizenship’, whereby, as a result of globalisation, “individuals as well as governments develop a flexible notion of citizenship and sovereignty as strategies to accumulate capital and power”. Such notions have implications for the practices and processes of citizenship within and beyond states; they may be able to make citizenship more relevant and inclusive for those with complex relations to the state. As Nagel and Staeheli (2004: 4) stress: “geographies of community, identity and citizenship are more complex and are in greater flux than much of the contemporary debate [on these issues] implies”. In reality, it may not be easy to determine whether Palestinians are experiencing a decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’. This chapter examines whether a dynamic and complex coupling *and* decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’ may be occurring for political, social and cultural material and symbolic purposes.

The acquisition of citizenship status (of Greece and other Western countries, in particular) as a strategy for security, protection and mobility highlights Palestinian perceptions of the use and importance of formal



citizenship status to their future. The strategic processes, feelings and actions that lead to the granting of citizenship, either in the host country or homeland have to be explored. It is here, between legal citizen and legal alien that we can place the articulations and activities of many Palestinians in Athens as they struggle to make sense of their 'Palestinian-ness', spaces and networks, in-between Greece and Palestine. At the same time, the acquisition of non-Palestinian citizenship status whilst in diaspora demonstrates that citizenship may no longer be synonymous with 'national identity'. The possession of a passport from Greece or any other Western country may not initially appear to affect constructions of belonging to Palestine and a Palestinian 'identity.' However, the instability and ambivalence of such constructions means that feeling 'in-between' can undermine the naturalised relationships between citizenship and 'identity'.

Those in diaspora are increasingly finding themselves in complicated situations, with fluid, multiple, strategic and situated feelings of belonging and ways of acting that are not limited to bounded nation-states. As Nagel and Staeheli (2004: 6, citing Mandaville 1999) note:

*Immigrant groups (or diasporas and transmigrants) are said to exist in a new global market of political loyalties, engaging in a complex politics of 'here and there' and resisting attempts by the state to "fix parameters of political community and territory" and to assimilate newcomers into a national culture.*

Unfortunately, many western-centric notions of citizenship do not often take such concerns and realities into account. McEwan (2005: 3) stresses that:

*Dominant conceptualisations of citizenship still rest largely on an abstract, universal and western-centric notion of the individual and are consequently unable to recognize either the political relevance of gender or of non-western perspectives and experiences.*

At the same time, abstract notions of what McEwan (*ibid.*) calls "political citizenship (in terms of an instrumental notion of political participation)" appear



to hold great appeal for diasporic Palestinians in Athens because of their statelessness and lack of formal citizenship (and consequent lack of ability to participate politically). This is despite their numerous negative experiences of how exclusive such notions of citizenship can be in reality.

The importance Palestinians in Athens attach to 'political citizenship', theoretically and materially stem from its continued relevance to the contemporary world. The salience and use of citizenship may be explained by ideas such as those of Arendt (1973, cited in Benhabib 2004: 47-61), who believed that citizenship gave a person all of the rights they needed to function within a society. Being stateless, therefore, amounted to the loss of all rights, displacement, potential exclusion and being in a state of 'limbo', trapped between territories. Arendt equated citizenship with 'the right to have rights' as well as statehood and felt that belonging entailed recognised membership within a group, where equality and equal human and civil rights could occur as a result. The problem arises when one tries to define the borders and associated identities of territories in which this can occur. These are extremely difficult issues to solve but they highlight the salience of citizenship theoretically because of the issues of rights, freedom, political participation, as well as political representation and democracy, which can be associated with it. Statelessness brings all these issues to the surface and forces a critical interrogation of them, through time and space.

The issues of statelessness, membership, exclusion and rights are especially applicable to Palestinians in Athens. The numerous examples presented below show how Palestinians feel persecuted, not necessarily by Greeks but by Greek and other institutional systems that may ban them from belonging and travelling. Even the few who do possess Greek citizenship may not be perceived to have the 'correct' cultural, social, religious characteristics in terms of prevailing perceptions of Greek 'national identity'. Greeks have lived under occupation in the past and are very protective of their citizenship, which is defined by blood, not birth (Rozakis 1996); Greek citizenship is tied to ethnicity, guarded closely and given frugally to those perceived as foreigners as a result (Fakiolas 1999). As outlined in Chapter One, the Greek state appears quite happy to allow migrants and those in diaspora to stay and to benefit from work as long



as they do not demand rights or citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Although this is beginning to change with the influence of the European Union, it is still the prevailing attitude with which Palestinians in Greece have to contend.

### **Coupling citizenship and ‘national identity’: consequences of the material realities of statelessness and perceptions of injustice**

Palestinians in Athens perceive the benefits and problems associated with citizenship as a formal status through and because of feelings and experiences of exile, statelessness, injustice, marginalisation and discrimination. At the same time, western-centric and abstract notions of citizenship and its relationships with ‘national identity’ and statehood influence their cultural, social and political positionings of belonging and ‘being Palestinian’.

The widespread need amongst Palestinians in Athens to prove and define themselves as Palestinian by official means suggests their need to clarify that they are ‘genuine’ Palestinians with the right to belong to a homeland called Palestine, in order to be considered viable Palestinian citizens in a future Palestinian state. It is still unclear, however, which Palestinians in diaspora will be entitled to claim Palestinian citizenship in such a state. The defining of oneself as Palestinian in Athens may thus be seen as a crucial political project that will eventually enable participation and access to rights and resources that they do not currently have. At the same time, such definitions can also be seen as a response to their feelings of marginalisation, discrimination and non-existence in Greek official categories. In response to a question on what makes him feel Palestinian, Faeq (45, FCE) describes how “They [the Greek authorities] don’t write that I am Palestinian, when I am. They don’t have a Palestinian category; we don’t exist”. There appears to be a need to show proof that they are Palestinians as a defensive mechanism. Mahmud (24, student), for example, stresses that he is a “genuine Palestinian. I have a Palestinian identity card and passport”. Tariq, (60, doctor) who has been in Greece for over thirty years, is a Greek citizen and is married to a Greek, still calls himself Palestinian because

---

<sup>2</sup> Even for those Palestinians who do acquire Greek citizenship status, political participation is not guaranteed and they may, therefore, still feel excluded or marginalized. As Nagel and Staeheli (2004: 5), stress: “it ...becomes necessary to distinguish between formal citizenship and substantive citizenship – that is, between one’s legal status and one’s ability to realise the rights and privileges of societal membership”.



“this will never change. My roots, my origins are Palestinian. And my papers write this, I’m not just saying it”. Such justifications may be a manifestation of the fact that Mahmud and Tariq as well as many other Palestinians in Athens, feel threatened and vulnerable, as well as insecure; having a defined ‘identity’ that they can prove by official means is, therefore, being continuously negotiated as important, because it can become a source of security, as well as pride.

Palestinian residency and official statuses are complex, often confusing and consequently difficult to generalise about. However, I provide Palestinian responses to their legal status in order to understand the perceptions, insecurities and realities of injustices and difficulties in terms of mobility, residency and political participation as a result of their legal status (and lack of formal citizenship status). This is because such perceptions and realities may have encouraged Palestinians to stress the importance of the acquisition of formal citizenship, either in a host country, or in a future Palestinian state. At the same time, the resulting implications of feelings of being ‘different’ and discriminated against in terms of imagining and constructing relationships between citizenship, ‘identity’ and statehood also have to be examined.

#### Statelessness and restrictions on mobility

Palestinians originally from the West Bank and Gaza face considerable restrictions in travelling, both within the Middle East and elsewhere because they hold a Palestinian passport. It has to be noted here that Palestinians in Athens perceive this passport differently. Some see it as a legitimate and official document, legalising their status as Palestinian. Others are more pessimistic, arguing that it is a fake document, that does not mean very much because Israel controls who is and is not allowed to have one, which for them nullifies its validity. Indeed, there are those who do not call it a passport at all, but an identity card and some, like Mahmud, (24, student) who use the terms interchangeably:

Liz: And these passports – how long have they been issued for?



Mahmud: *In 1996 and when I came here, the residents who were in Bethlehem and its surroundings, the West Bank and Gaza got the passport and identity card. Okay, they are Palestinian but they have to go through Israel.*

Liz: So it's not a proper one?

Mahmud: *No, they are, but the passport, when they issue it in Gaza, because that's where they are issued, they are sent first to the Israelis who keep a copy of the number, the details on file and then after they've checked everything and put you on file you can collect your passport.*

Liz: So with this passport do you encounter difficulties travelling?

Mahmud: *At Tel Aviv airport they single you out of 1000 people. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it isn't. The good thing is you don't have to wait in any queues (laughs). As soon as they see that they have a Palestinian – for example, the last time I went, they had been informed that a Palestinian was coming.*

Liz: Really?

Mahmud: *Yes, of course, this always happens – they know everything. They know from when you go and get your ticket at the travel agency. I phoned Olympic airways when I was there and told them I was travelling but I only had the old ticket – the one for 5 days earlier – because of the permit I had to get from the Israelis. Because you have to get this permit, they know you're travelling; they don't have to check with Olympic to see who's travelling. From the moment you get a permit they know that you're travelling on that day at that time. They looked for me at the airport. They look at your face and they ask you what passport you have. But because of the number of journeys since 1996 that I have made, I knew this so I made it easy for them to find me, and they carried out a special check on me. They check everything, your clothes. They ask you questions to which they already know the answers, just to see if you're telling the truth. I remember the first time I went from Greece to Palestine, it was 5 months after I had gone there. They knew the name of my flat mate; he was a*



*guy from Syria. They knew the address of where I lived; they knew everything. They had a description of my house – they even knew the contents of my room.*

Liz: Really?

*Mahmud: Yes. I had been at the airport for 2 hours and I was the only Palestinian who was there and they were asking me about girls I had been out with – they said to me you went out with a blonde girl on such a such a date at such a such a time – I mean they were asking me details that I had forgotten. You can't hide anything from them.*

Liz: I didn't realise they checked everything quite so thoroughly.

*Mahmud: Yes. They check everyone who's on the first year away at university to see what they're like, what sort of a risk they are – they want to find out if people are really studying or involved in political issues, you see.*

Liz: But how are they able to find out all this information?

*Mahmud: They have a large amount of informants and secret police.*

Liz: Even here in Greece?

*Mahmud: Half of them work here.*

While there are always issues of accuracy regarding personal testimonies, feelings of persecution and surveillance appear very strongly here.<sup>3</sup> Being singled out because they are different is something Palestinians have had to get used to but that is still hard for them to deal with. For example, Mustafa (42, unemployed) says:

---

<sup>3</sup> Issues of accuracy are outlined in Chapter Three.



*I have a Palestinian passport. It's not like a proper passport, it's more of a travel document; it's difficult to get a visa with it. (He shows it to me. On it, the words 'Palestinian passport' and 'travel document' are both written). It's hard because with every application you make, every procedure, you are in another category; you're singled out as different, needing special treatment.*

The families of other Palestinians fled historical Palestine after 1948 and went to various neighbouring countries. This has had varying repercussions in terms of their citizenship and mobility in Athens.<sup>4</sup> They can be split into two groups. There are those who went to Lebanon, Egypt, Syria and other parts of the Middle East and those who went to what is now called Jordan. In Lebanon, their fate has been especially hard. They have been given travel documents, which create problems for them in terms of mobility, but more importantly, they have been subject to high levels of discrimination.<sup>5</sup> Ahmed (34, FCE), whose family settled as refugees in Lebanon, describes the situation and the material consequences for his documentation, which he himself finds confusing:

*we have travel documents in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt – they gave them to Palestinians who left in 1948 and then in 1967 they give another travel document but whoever registered in Lebanon in 1948, they have these travel documents and those who left in '67 don't have the travel documents that we have.*

Liz: They have something different?

Ahmed: *Actually, I don't know exactly. For example, they have the right to go back to the West Bank. We don't have this right even with these peace negotiations.*

---

<sup>4</sup> For an overview in terms of their citizenship statuses in the Middle East and beyond see relevant sections in Karmi and Cotran (1999).

<sup>5</sup> For more information on Palestinian realities of discrimination in Lebanon see, for example, Uglerud (2002); Shiblak (1997) and Sayigh (1994; 2001).



It should also be noted that they have no right to go to the Occupied Territories, let alone visit the land they lost and came from originally, which is now Israel. Faeq (45, FCE) also stresses his anger at what he perceives as the injustice of this:

*I don't have the right as a 1948 refugee even to ask for the Palestinian passport. I can't get it. I don't have the right to get that passport because you know that passport is better than what I'm having now, the Lebanese travel document. It's ridiculous and that's why they don't want to give us the right to go back there.*

Both quotes also highlight the number of categories from which Palestinians have the potential to be included and excluded. The mobility restrictions they face are well illustrated by Layla, (38, FCE) as she responds to a question on how easy it is for her to travel:

*(Laughs) It's impossible! Because I remember, before 6 or 7 years, my friends – they were immigrants to Canada, so I just wanted to go there to Canada. They gave Hassan<sup>6</sup> the Greek passport, this is another story (laughs) – they told me that my son could go without a visa, but that I do need a visa. Okay, I applied for a visa but they refused to give me one so I couldn't go to see my friends. Also, if I want to visit my parents in Abu Dhabi, I need a visa but Hassan doesn't. My parents applied to go to Canada to but they didn't get in but my brother and sister did. There are a lot of difficulties for Palestinians. When we talk to other nationalities, they always ask are you crazy? Nobody can believe our situation.*

Bilal (33, FCE) also describes the difficulties he has encountered:

*Bilal: I was a Palestinian living in Lebanon, which is Palestinian Lebanese. Actually when you get this passport, it means that you are a refugee living in Lebanon but not a lot of governments recognise this travel document and it's a shame to say this but it is mostly the Arabic countries who don't recognise it. Actually, let us say the truth – when the PLO was in Lebanon, maybe the Arab*

---

<sup>6</sup> Hassan is Layla's son.



*countries were afraid of it or whatever, I don't know exactly what the case was, but I know that secret intelligence there knows everything and they know who's in and whose out and they co-operated a lot, but actually it affects our life and our work a lot – we can't go here, we can't go there.*

Liz: Can you travel freely here in Europe?

*Bilal: Here, with my residence permit I can. Otherwise, if I was in Lebanon, for example and I needed to come to Europe for whatever reason, I would need to go to the embassy every day and it would be very difficult, you would need to prove that as a refugee you're not looking to move to the country permanently and so on.*

Bilal's situation in Greece, like all those without Greek citizenship, is precarious at times. For Palestinians displaced in 1948, it is especially so, as there may not be anywhere else for them to go to easily. Those without a Palestinian 'identity card' and without citizenship from a Western country are especially hard hit by this lack of alternative places to live. They appear to live where they can as best they can. Even within families, citizenship statuses can be confusing, and this, as Ahmed (34, FCE) and his wife, Maha (29, housewife) explain below, can be an issue not only for them, but for their children as well:

*Ahmed: I carry a Syrian passport. It was granted to my dad by a general who became the president of Syria and he granted very few of them, so he's carrying a Syrian passport, my son, but he knows that he is not Syrian, you know he asked me, how come I have a Syrian passport when you say I am Palestinian. Sometimes you feel it must be so frustrating for him*

*Maha: And confusing.*

*Ahmed: He cannot understand, it's very difficult and we both say that we are Palestinian.*



Liz: This is something that Palestinian children have to deal with from an early age, unlike other children, I suppose

Maha: *Yes, and for them it's always strange.*

In Egypt, Palestinians have also been given travel documents, that has also meant mobility restrictions and difficulties, which seem to have followed them to Greece.<sup>7</sup> Jamal's testimony (Appendix Two) provides a good example of this, as it illustrates the very complex and problematic situations such Palestinians can find themselves in as a result of their status. These Palestinians (such as those whose families fled to Lebanon) are not allowed to enter Israel or the West Bank and Gaza, conditions many find particularly unfair. Their future situation is also precarious; as already noted, it is yet unclear whether diasporic Palestinians not originally from the West Bank and Gaza (as well as those from these areas originally who have moved away) will be allowed Palestinian citizenship in an eventual Palestinian state. This issue is one that Palestinians in diaspora in Athens have started thinking about, but no easy solutions appear to be in sight and it constitutes a very emotive and frustrating issue. Jamal (34, FCE) discusses his own feelings on the matter (see also Appendix Two):

Liz: And if a Palestinian state is created, will Palestinians such as yourself in the diaspora have the right to go and live there if you want to?

Jamal: *This is under negotiation. How can they have the right to say and decide whether I am Palestinian or not? This means they can take your rights and, therefore, your hope, away from you; somebody is doing your negotiation on your behalf and they will pay you money. What is this? Who has the right and the idea to do this? And nobody can claim that it [the land] is not ours. But the Israelis have the American support. They insist that we have to give away the right of return and what I am afraid of is that our authorities will accept this and this time I don't know what will happen because I can't imagine what will*

---

<sup>7</sup> For more information on the situation of Palestinians in Egypt see Yasin (1999).



*happen to me if they claim that I am not Palestinian. So what kind of compensation can they give to me and by whom?*

The ability of Palestinians to enter and reside in Greece also illustrates the issues surrounding mobility, legal status and feelings of insecurity (and injustice) as a result. Many Palestinians (men, in particular) came as students, as this appears to have been a relatively easy way for them to enter. As Layla (38, FCE) explains:

*Greece was the only country that would accept me...my parents were told at the time by friends that it was very easy to get a student visa to come to Greece, so we went to the Greek Embassy in Abu Dhabi where we were living at the time and they gave me a student visa for 3 months and they gave my mother a visitor's visa.*

Indeed, some interviewees claim that they pretended to be students in order to enter and then found jobs after they had done so. All Palestinians who are not Greek citizens need to have a work and residence permit to live and work in Greece. There appear to be contradicting accounts of how easy it is to both obtain these and to renew them. Some say they have encountered no difficulties at all or even that they are favoured or helped whenever they have anything to do with Greek officials. Others have more difficulties and it is not clear why this may be occurring. A possible explanation may be the level of contacts and skills of persuasion individual Palestinians have in terms of their networks with people who may be in a position to help them, such as embassy or Greek official employees.

Foreign companies in Greece that are allowed to employ non-Greek nationals also provide ease of mobility and residency for their Palestinian employees. These Palestinians, such as Bilal (33, FCE) usually get their work and residence permit through the company:

Liz: So it helps you to be part of the company you work for in terms of travelling?



Bilal: *Yes and I am happy that I am working for the company because otherwise it would be very difficult and I am getting a chance that very few people get from my area. I am lucky. I am a professional in my work but I have also had good luck.*

Residency is not something that they have to deal with, although some noted that these companies are having difficulties renewing their permits:

Liz: Have you ever had any problems renewing it?

Bilal: *Actually, there is a problem but I don't know much about it because the company usually takes care of these things – this is what they do. For example, once for two, three, four months, I didn't take the risk travelling out of Greece because I wasn't sure whether they would let me return.*

Bilal highlights how beneficial such companies are for Palestinians in terms of residency and standard of living. At the same time, he demonstrates their vulnerability and dependence on their jobs for residency (and often the ability to travel more freely). As a result, many Palestinians in Athens who work for such companies feel they are lucky and are thankful that they are able to live and work in Greece.

All Palestinians without Greek (or other Western country) citizenship status are plagued by feelings of insecurity, despite the fact that many appear to quite like living in Greece. Residency issues also appear to be becoming more problematic for them in Greece and as Layla (38, FCE) says: “we are at the mercy of Greek law; if it changes, we are lost”. Lina (38, businesswoman) also points out:

Lina: *Now, that I have the Greek passport, I am okay, but before it was a big problem.*

Liz: I've heard that it's difficult.



Lina: *Yes, the Arabs – let's talk about the people from Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria – these Arabs they never take residence permit unless they are students or from Law '89 companies...otherwise there's no way on earth to get the residence.*

Lina is lucky; students and workers are well aware of the daily realities of obtaining and renewing residence permits, such as queuing and waiting outside Ministries. Karim (24, student) explains his situation:

Karim: *Well, I have a problem now with my residence.*

Liz: Oh, what sort of problem?

Karim: *I had to collect all these papers – to say that I am a student, that I get a scholarship and that I am not in trouble with the police, which I did, and I gave them in on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2002. You have to give in all these papers to get a residence permit and I had to wait hours in line, 8 hours I had to wait, but still they haven't given me my residence permit which I am supposed to have and which I should be given. I don't understand why they have not given it to me.*

Liz: Are any of the other students experiencing the same problem?

Karim: *Yes, all of them.*

Liz: Can't the embassy do anything?

Karim: *No, they said they can't – there's nothing they can do. It's a matter for the Greek authorities. So now I just have this paper that says when I applied for a residence permit and that shows that I am waiting to get one and this is what I have to show the police when they stop me. (He shows it to me)*

Liz: So have you been stopped many times by the police?



Karim: *Quite a few times.*

Liz: Do they make things difficult for you?

Karim: *No, not really. I just show them this paper, but you know I do feel insecure without the residence permit. And I had to pay 147 euros as well when I applied but I still haven't received anything.*

Residency and mobility issues highlight and are a good example of the difficulties and injustices many Palestinians feel they have to endure as a result of their often confusing and complex formal status and the fact that they do not have formal citizenship in Greece. Although all non-European 'foreign' residents in Greece may have difficulties with residency, problems surrounding ease of movement and Right of Return are particularly acute for those in exile or displaced such as refugees, and especially for those such as the Palestinians, without an official state to belong or return to. As Said (1986: 52) stresses:

*Although to Palestinians today the word awdah ('return') is crucial and stands at the very heart of our political quest for self-determination, to some it means return to a Palestinian state alongside Israel, yet to others it means a return to all of Palestine.*

The realities and perceptions of insecurities, injustice and suffering (in which the issues outlined above result) are crucial aspects of the need to belong to an official Palestinian state, which would protect their rights and provide benefits to them as Palestinian citizens. These include ease of mobility and political representation and participation, such as voting. As Sana (34, housewife) states, "Palestinians outside Palestine are often left with nothing, nothing formal, no citizenship...if you can't travel as a result or do the things you want to do, you will say why me? It's not fair". Haleef (55, embassy official) also highlights the feelings of persecution and discrimination Palestinians feel subject to that extend beyond their own personal experiences.



At the same time, these feelings serve to strengthen their resolve to deal with the injustices they feel they are facing:

*So, let's say you see a successful, a great doctor at a conference and his hospital, the Greek government chooses him to go to represent Greece. Now listen, because he hasn't got Greek citizenship and he can't go, he gets rejected as a candidate because he is Palestinian and he can't get a visa immediately. He has to wait a month before he gets an answer from the Americans, before he can get a visa. This is unfair. This, inside you, it doesn't make you become a bad person because you have reached a level where you know who you are and people accept you. You know, you got recommended, not someone else. They didn't have a problem with you going (I'm talking about the example of the doctor). They didn't look at you with hate because it was you going to this conference. In reality, this gives you strength. I don't mean physical strength. This strength is related to your soul and how much you are able to endure, even when you're talking to the American who won't give you a visa. You're still the one that's winning; you'll come out on top even if you're not given a visa. This attitude of not wanting to show who you are is not something you can learn as a lesson. It's something you're born with. As you become more educated and your level of education rises, the more you become correct and skilled in dealing with and solving your own problems.*

Such stories and realities serve to remind Palestinians of the importance of formal citizenship status and rights, as well as the significance of knowledge and education to help deal with the problems they will potentially face because they are Palestinian. Although there are material impacts as a result of the lack of (or confusing) formal citizenship status from a Western country, such as Greece, the strength that Haleef mentions also demonstrates how citizenship and what it stands for can have positive repercussions as well.

Both Haleef and Sana (referred to above) have defined citizenship statuses; Haleef is a Greek citizen and Sana is Jordanian. Such status affords more security and ease in terms of mobility and Sana and Haleef do not feel overly vulnerable or discriminated against, personally. This, however, does not



stop them from highlighting, knowing and being angered or upset by the injustices and suffering they feel Palestinians as a people have to endure. Such highlighting and knowledge of suffering can also be seen as politicised acts of advocacy as a consequence of their own exile and displacement. Perceptions of suffering and injustice are crucial to constructions of the importance of citizenship and statehood. These are depicted by the majority of Palestinians in Athens regardless of citizenship status. At the same time, they understand the political need to link future statehood with a defined Palestinian 'identity' and this has played a major role in their articulations of citizenship despite any personal feelings of ambivalence they may have.

Lindholm Schulz (2003: 88) explains Palestinian understandings of formal citizenship and its relationships to (or coupling with) 'national identity' in the following way: "the Palestinians are constantly faced with suspicion, harassment and exclusion because they cannot prove a national identity, a citizenship legally inscribed in their passports". Yet, as has already been noted, she also claims that "*the* condition of being Palestinian...is to move" (*ibid.*: 87). This may help explain why Palestinians feel so insecure and why they are continuing to persevere and resist; they cannot help the fact that they have to move around but at the same time, this breeds vulnerability and a desire for security and stability which many Palestinians feel only a Palestinian state can provide. This, as discussed, is because the state is seen as the provider of the rights and protection that people perceive they need to feel secure. Movement and travelling is for them, more often than not, far from easy, yet they often have no choice but to move because of their statelessness. This is a reminder of the need to ground accounts and theories of movement and mobility. Despite the importance and symbolic attraction of the transgressing of borders, the realities of travelling and living 'on the move' may be problematic and far from empowering for those involved.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> A recent issue of *Identities* (2004) highlights the complexities surrounding the material mobility and immobility of people at borders, stressing the need to take into account and explore the realities of power relations, opportunities as well as hindrances posed by institutional systems and states.



### Suffering, representation and ‘national identity’

The cross-border connections that link Palestinians in Athens to the situation in Palestine, and the constant relaying of information from Palestine to Greece through the mass media and telecommunications, has ensured that most Palestinians in Athens are well aware of current events and problems both in Palestine-Israel and in the Middle East.<sup>9</sup> This has manifested itself into popular images of Palestinian suffering and above all, injustice and discrimination that, in turn, influences perceptions of the need for formal citizenship, statehood and belonging. Palestinians in Athens appear to have a catalogue of injustices, about which they know a great deal. For some, like Lina, (38, businesswoman) this anguish also turns into anger, indignation and frustration at the injustices they perceive Palestinians are undergoing. Lina’s testimony (Appendix Three) exemplifies the despair and sadness many Palestinians in Athens feel. She, like many others have numerous stories of suffering that they have heard through personal and media accounts. During the discussion (part of which is provided below), Lina becomes very emotional and starts to cry, which illustrates that these are often very difficult issues psychologically for Palestinians to deal with:

*I knew this girl; she was a friend of mine. She lived in Ramallah; she was 38 and suddenly they discovered that she had cancer and her father wanted to send her for chemotherapy and it was the time last year in March, they had troubles in Ramallah, so she couldn’t reach the hospital and she was suffering because she needed surgery. Anyway, she died 2 months after, so you see, the human being in Palestine has no human rights, nothing, nothing (starts crying).*

Lina’s testimony also shows the intimate relationships between personal and media accounts in people’s perceptions, the coming together of ‘here’ and ‘there’ and the difficult disjointed amalgamation of colonial and postcolonial worlds. Feelings of what could be called ‘collective suffering’, which go hand in hand with perceptions of ‘collective memories’ and ‘shared consciousness’ (as discussed in Chapter Five) form part of dynamic constructions of what it means

---

<sup>9</sup> These cross-border connections are discussed in Chapters Two and Four.



to be Palestinian living in Athens but also connected to 'there'. Such images and perceptions of injustice and suffering, therefore, have a large role to play in constructions and realities of Palestinians as persecuted, marginalised and as victims of a situation that needs to be resolved. Media representations are often seen by Palestinians in Athens as not only a source of injustice but also as a means to advocate their cause and, therefore, to create what they see as changes for the better. This may be because, as mainly non-citizens, they do not have many formal channels they can follow to ensure that what they feel is fair political representation of their rights and problems. Arafat was the closest symbolic leader whom non-Palestinians assumed represented Palestinian interests. In the years before his death, however, support for him appears to have decreased amongst some Palestinians in Athens, as accounts of Palestinian Authority corruption have increased.

The majority of diasporic Palestinians interviewed feel that they do not have a political voice with which to speak and be heard, either in Greece, Palestine, or globally. This research also suggests that many Palestinians in Athens feel that they are not being adequately represented politically and that there is insufficient organisation around this issue. This appears to be because many Palestinians in Athens do not possess formal citizenship, which excludes them from the official public political arena. Even those with Palestinian 'identity cards' feel isolated and find it hard to have their voices heard 'there'. As Said (1986: 158) stresses: "there are very few of us who can avoid the fate of every Palestinian, which is to be both *there*, and yet not to be accounted for politically". For Palestinians in Athens, representation is, therefore, an issue at the forefront of many of their debates and often a dilemma, as it is linked to ideas of democracy and political participation. Fair representation can be seen as a major aspect of citizen rights within a democratic state. For Palestinians who are effectively stateless, political representation is arguably perceived as even more crucial because they may feel more isolated and excluded as they do not have access to formal channels of representation, such as voting.

Many Palestinians are restricted and frustrated by their inability to vote 'there' and their wish to see a Palestinian state is linked to their need to be able to potentially participate as Palestinian citizens within such a state in the future.



It is important to stress that these issues often provoke intense reactions of injustice, which seem to merge into general feelings of suffering and difference. For example, in response to a question on not being able to vote, Rafat (48, FCE and PLO representative in Athens) says:

*All these details, not being able to vote reminds you that you are different, that you don't have the same rights as everyone else...you are always reminded...that you are not truly free, so that you cannot vote, that is just one part of everything, of people here at Easter going to their villages to see their families. I'm jealous, that they can eat all together. All these things remind us that we're different.*

Another problem in terms of representation that is frequently noted is the potential for disagreement and disunity amongst Palestinians in Athens, especially within political beliefs and solutions for the future. As Tamara (32, researcher) points out in response to a question on whether she feels all major Palestinian political organisations are represented in Greece:

*Yes, you can find Al - Fatah, the Popular Front, The Democratic Front and Hamas, but it is hard to have a say whatever your ideology because we are not a country so there are no formal places here where you can go and be heard politically. If it was then we could. We are all in-between really in this respect, because we have organisations and networks but they can never be fully functional because we are not a proper country. The embassy in its capacity is supposed to represent all the Palestinians here but the people there are PLO or PNA and some people do feel that these organisations don't represent them, but there is not much they can do about this now really is there?*

Many interviewees feel that they should be in charge of representing themselves and that they can and should be allowed to sort things out on their own. As Lina (38, businesswoman) argues:

*Leave us alone; let us make the revolution. Let us sort out our political problems, our social problems; you take care of your problems. I'm not saying*



*we have the best leaders, we don't but they are not criminals. I mean we prefer them to anybody else.*

Currently, such notions of control and self-representation seem to be more of an ideal than a reality. Political representation is a difficult and problematic issue. As the majority of Palestinians in Athens are 'classed' as foreigners, they have few official rights in Greece, as the two quotes below illustrate:

*What can we do? We are not Greek citizens, so we cannot influence the Greek government or politics. We are helpless here as foreigners; we cannot vote or get involved in politics. All we can do is tell people about the situation. The only thing we can do is introduce and talk about our cause to others; this is very important.*

(Majid, 36, FCE)

*The only thing that we can do, as Palestinians who live outside and who have never been there is to let the people know that truth about our history, because we have a history and we're not terrorists. On the contrary, we are the victims, we are the people who are getting killed, we are the people who are in pain.*

(Lina, 38, businesswoman)

As outlined above, the majority of ordinary Palestinians living in Athens have no rights in Palestine; their voices cannot necessarily be heard there unless they are involved in official circles. Therefore, even having the formal citizenship status of any other country also does not help them much in terms of physical ability to participate 'there', even though it gives them more security, peace of mind and more options for the future, as well as the right to potential political participation. It is however, in a Palestinian state that most would rather participate in politically. Many Palestinians in Athens feel abandoned by the political processes currently in place in the West Bank and Gaza. Feeling Palestinian is clearly not enough to guarantee official representation and political participation:



Liz: Do you feel that it's problematic that you don't have many means available to you to have a say in what's going on there politically?

Faeq: *Yes, here we don't have the means or the opportunity to affect what's going on there or to influence the situation. Here we have contact with NGOs that are based there. We support them and they are neutral. They just see the problem as it is. They are just concerned with helping people, which is what they should be doing. For example, there is an NGO that is concerned with replanting uprooted trees and another helping people whose houses have been demolished. They are all humanitarian organisations. But the fact that we cannot vote is a problem. They don't care about Palestinians living outside Palestine and it is a big problem. The PNA doesn't take into account the Palestinians who live abroad of which there are so many. I think now the PNA is starting to realise how important we are.* (Faeq, 45, FCE)

One discussion with a married couple (Appendix Four), Ahmed (34, FCE) and Maha, (29, housewife) illustrates succinctly the complex issues surrounding 'unity', representation and participation (as well as the spatial and temporal issues involved). Neither respondent has Greek citizenship; Ahmed has Syrian travel documents and Maha has a Palestinian 'identity card'. They discuss how they feel representation for Palestinians in diaspora has changed over the years. They believe that it is currently very difficult for Palestinians in diaspora such as themselves to have their voices officially heard in Palestine and to be adequately represented there. Ahmed feels that: "It's difficult for the Palestinians. Now with this current situation, I don't think our opinions would be heard – it's very difficult for us". Later, he adds: "like with this Geneva thing, let's say we don't like it, how do we let our voice reach, or be heard?"<sup>10</sup> They point to what they call the "dissolving" of the PLO by the Israelis and the Americans, whom they see as trying to weaken Palestinian 'unity'. At the same time, it is also clear that

---

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed is referring to the Geneva Accord of October 2003, which was an attempt to resolve the situation in Palestine/Israel (see [www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/documents/geneva.html](http://www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/documents/geneva.html) for details of it).



they are actively debating and negotiating the Palestinian political situation, which they see as complicated and dynamic.

Maha feels that they and Palestinian refugees 'outside' have to depend on Palestinians 'inside', as she puts it in order to resist. She feels it is up to them, as they currently live there and she appears to have faith in their decisions. Ahmed, however, is not so sure, pointing out that more Palestinians live in diaspora. Although he appears disillusioned in terms of Palestinian representation, he also seems resigned to the fact that as they and others such as refugees are limited by their physical separation and their lack of adequate representation and that they must depend to a large extent on groups within Palestine to speak on their behalf.

The majority of respondents are extremely aware of what it means to be a citizen of a defined state, in terms of rights and duties (as well as of constructions of Palestinian 'identity'). As Mahmud (24, student) stresses for example, "the most significant thing for us is to have a solution to the issue of a country, for a country to exist to feel that you have the rights that every person has and is entitled to". It is this hope of the positive aspects of the rights and benefits associated with citizenship, statehood and democracy that often spurs their feelings and perceptions for change, for their own personal lives, but more importantly, for Palestinians as a nation of people and in particular, those who are living in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian cause can be seen as being advocated mainly as a means to create a Palestinian state for these reasons. The associations between citizenship, statehood and 'national identity' can be seen by the political advocacy of a 'Palestinian state for the Palestinian people' as articulated by many participants and can also be seen in Palestinian visions of their future state, outlined below.

Many participants, generally speaking, would like to see a return to pre-1948 Palestine (or historical Palestine). This is seen as the 'original' or 'authentic' Palestine and would, therefore, constitute a return to a 'proper' or desirable relationship between 'national identity' and territory, in other words that Palestinians should live in a country called Palestine based on its historical territory. The idea of historical Palestine appears to remain as a nostalgic, symbolic and powerful notion of what has been lost and what needs to be regained; namely a state for the Palestinian people to call their own, where they



can be citizens, vote, have political rights and so forth. Some of these Palestinians argue, as Layla (38, FCE) does, that the “Jews should go back where they came from”, because “they have not always lived there”. This argument appears to be based on the idea of self-determination, which proposes that each nation of people can have and are entitled to their own nation-state. For Palestinians ascribing to these views, the notion of citizenship appears to be one of ‘jus sanguinis’, or membership based on ties of blood and ‘ethnicity’. It also appears to be based on exclusive notions of nationhood, where Israelis or Jews would perhaps be unwelcome, or if they did stay would have to do so within a Palestinian, not Israeli state. It may be easier for those Palestinians who feel comfortable and safe in diaspora in the West to nostalgically reminisce and imagine such an independent Palestinian state than those living in the West Bank and Gaza and in refugee camps there and around the Middle East.

Haleef (see Appendix Five), an embassy official, who believes in an eventual return to pre-1948 Palestine, is indicative of the thought processes and dilemmas, as well as anger and frustration Palestinians in Athens often have to deal with in terms of injustice and suffering:

*I can't make my child commit... to a solution now, that we've sorted it out and that you can forget that you had a house in Tel Aviv. I can't tell them this Elizabeth. I don't have the right. I have to make sure that future generations of children have the opportunity and have the right in the future when conditions may be different or the situation will change to say to the Israelis, gentlemen you were strong then, you took our houses, you made us sign a paper that said that this is the Palestinian land that we are entitled to, to say no this is not acceptable. Just like you and in the same ways, using violence and dominance, that you took it from me, I will take it from you. I don't have the right to sign on behalf of the refugees who live today in the refugee camps of Lebanon inside a house the size of this room, to people who have been waiting 50 years for this issue to be resolved. I can't say to them forget about it, forget about going back. We have to be patient. I'm going to sign to create the sort of state they are suggesting now to put my mind at rest, so that this situation can end? No, because it's not fair for them.*



Some Palestinians also feel that although they accept that Israel is 'here to stay', they would ideally like to see a return to pre-1948 Palestine. They do, however, accept that this is not possible. They are prepared to accept a Palestinian state of sorts, based on Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza (although some do see this as a stepping stone to eventual pre-1948 conditions), as a two-state solution. As Sa'id (25, student) states:

*If we get the land of '67, we can at least put down the foundations and establish ourselves for the future in order to have a strong economy, companies, people can go back and provide for their country and their country can provide for them. Good strong foundations for the future so that no one can take us away from there again and as soon as we're established there, God knows.*

Sa'id's position is one of practical steps to solve the current situation; for him and many others in Greece, a state based on 1967 borders is not desirable but merely realistic given the present state of affairs.

The diasporic stressing of the need for a Palestinian state is politically, culturally and socially infused. For Palestinians in Athens, the need to belong to a defined country in order to feel 'at home' and be around people with similar constructions of 'shared consciousness' is extremely strong. At the same time, the injustices and suffering they believe they and their fellow Palestinians undergo as a direct result of not having such as a state appear to form a firm basis for the political advocacy of self-determination and statehood. As a result, the coupling of 'national identity' and citizenship can be seen. However, some Palestinians in Athens have acquired (or are in the process of acquiring) formal citizenship status; this highlights the need to also take the decoupling of citizenship and 'national identity' into account.

### **Palestinian acquisition of formal citizenship: the decoupling of citizenship and 'national identity'**

The acquisition of Greek citizenship raises questions about the decoupling of Palestinian 'identity' from explicitly Palestinian citizenship. Palestinians in Athens attach great importance to the acquisition of citizenship from Western



countries such as Greece as they feel such passports afford more protection and security. As Lindholm Schulz (2003: 188) points out: “what appears to be significant to Palestinians living in Western countries is the sense of security provided by the passport and by the political system”. A passport proves official and legal belonging to those who are stateless and who often have little means of political participation. Therefore, those Palestinians in Athens with a defined citizenship status, such as Jordanian, or Greek (the two which appear to be the most common) seem to feel less marginalised and discriminated against and more secure (financially and psychologically) and more mobile. Such positive repercussions of legal citizenship status also fuel Palestinian belief in the importance of the acquisition of formal citizenship, particularly of Western countries.

Out of those Palestinians who have Greek citizenship status, many are married or have been married to Greeks and they seem to be settled in Greece (although for many the acquisition of Greek citizenship appears this has been out of necessity not choice and has been their only or best option). It is often very hard to obtain Greek citizenship and commitment in doing so is vital, as it takes ten years of residency before they can apply and even when they do, it appears to be a very long, complicated and drawn out process. It is also expensive, especially if one pays one's way to quicken the process, as some Palestinians appear to have done. Abdul (28, casual office worker) highlights the cost and the difficulties of obtaining Greek citizenship:

*It would be good to have a Greek passport, but you have to pay about half a million just to apply and they ask you so many ridiculous things during the application process and you have to prove that you've been here at least 10 years, I think. It's difficult. And you have to be employed, I think.*

Despite such difficulties, there are Palestinians with money and connections who seem to find it easier to get what they want if they know people ‘in the right places’. As Khalid (43, self-employed garage owner) reveals: “it only took me three years, because I know someone. Others wait 10 years”. One Palestinian



also pointed out when I asked him how easy it was for him to get citizenship, “If you know people here, anything is possible” (Nabil, 37, engineer).

Layla’s (38, FCE) story also illustrates the role of having the right ‘connections’, obtaining Greek citizenship as well as the strange and difficult position people can be put in as a result of their citizenship status:

*Let me tell you the story of my son – how we got his passport. I am Palestinian with the Lebanese travel documents. My ex-husband, he’s Palestinian with Syrian travel documents. I don’t have the right to give my son the Lebanese travel documents. I mean I can’t put his name on my passport. Also my ex-husband, he lost his civil rights in Syria, because he was against the government so he had the Yemeni passport. These passports were given to the PLO as presents to make life easier for these people in the PLO but they were not allowed to give them to their children or their family so as you can understand, the conclusion of this was that my son was without a nationality.*

Liz: Where was he born?

*Layla: Here in Athens; this was what helped us so one of our friends said, you know guys I had a similar problem with my son and my daughter; he was with the PLO too, so we said please tell us what to do because our son has no papers to say who he is, so he said we can go and apply for Greek nationality because he can’t get yours and he can’t get his fathers but he was born in Athens and something in the Greek law says that if a person was born in Greece and he can’t get either his mother’s or his father’s nationality, so he can get a Greek nationality, so this is what happened. It was very difficult for me for 2 and half years until he got it; it was a nightmare for me. So for 2 and half years I couldn’t travel, I couldn’t go anywhere; he had no papers, just the birth certificate. But all this happened, and now I’m really happy that this happened because he got a good passport; he can go and do whatever he wants; it’s good for his future.*

Layla also illustrates how such acquisition of citizenship can have financial benefits:



Layla: *Even though I get paid less than my male colleagues because I am a woman, my job is better than nothing and I am a single mother, I have to pay everything myself.*

Liz: You've never looked for anything else?

Layla: *It's difficult, because of the residence permit. I've heard that so many times, that it's not easy to find a Greek company to pay for your work permit; at the foreign company I work for they do it because it's a Law '89 company and they have so many facilities for us, to help. Maybe if I get the Greek nationality, I think I will most probably look for another job... but I have no choice. When I get the Greek nationality, maybe I'll go back to live with my parents because I'm also so tired of being on my own, doing everything by myself, it's so difficult... So, if I am able to find a good offer in Abu Dhabi I will go and live with my parents.*

Liz: But you can't go now?

Layla: *If I go now, maybe I can maybe I can't, I haven't looked in to the possibility. As a European, I will gain triple the money.*

Liz: Really?

Layla: *If I go as a Palestinian – my brother, he is married, he works there. He's a human resource manager. If he works with his Palestinian travel document, he would gain 3 or 4,000 but with his Canadian nationality he earns about 13,000 just because he's Canadian, it's ridiculous. He said to me, please don't come back until you take the Greek nationality, because otherwise you will not live like us and you will live like you live in Greece, with little money. With our names, our nationality, we cannot live a good lifestyle.*



Layla's account also highlights the important issue of gender within the Palestinian diaspora as well as within the workplace of such companies.<sup>11</sup> Although an in-depth analysis of this is beyond the scope of this thesis, there is a need to understand the particular ways in which women are affected by and perceive citizenship and political participation.<sup>12</sup>

Even Palestinians with Greek citizenship appear to encounter difficulties and find it hard to travel. Tariq (60, doctor), who has been politically active in the past, explains:

*It was hard to go across the borders – they wouldn't let us. This was before I got Greek citizenship and even now when I went the last time, I still had problems at the borders, because we were held for 2 hours while they interrogated us.*

Liz: Even though you had Greek citizenship?

Tariq: *Yes, that didn't make any difference; all that matters is that you are Palestinian.*

Liz: How often do you go back to Jordan and Jerusalem?

Tariq: *To Jordan, I go every year. To Palestine – we are not allowed to go.*

Tariq outlines his perception of always feeling 'different' because he is Palestinian as a result of the problems he has had travelling. His Palestinian name is both a source of pride and problems for him and only a Palestinian state is seen as a solution to such persecution and marginalisation.

The acquisition of citizenship from Western countries increases Palestinian access to Israel/Palestine, an issue many Palestinians in Athens find crucial. Many want to be able to go back, either to visit or to live and for many

---

<sup>11</sup> This illustrates the need to explore and understand the specific, gendered experiences of diaspora and exile – for example, see Ghada Karmi's autobiography (2002), Blunt (2005) and Buijs (ed. 1993). The gendered nature of diasporic spaces, such as the home, is touched upon in Chapter Seven.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, McEwan (2000, 2005); Lister (1997); Staeheli and Cope (1994).



this is an active strategy that is relentlessly pursued, however long it may take. As Ibrahim (32, construction worker) explains: “We cannot go there; it’s difficult for us to go, that’s why we need to get Greek citizenship - so that we can go there”.<sup>13</sup> Even if they do not get to see a Palestinian state in their lifetime, the chance to visit either or both historical Palestine and the West Bank and Gaza is often an important force behind the acquisition of Western country citizenship. This is especially the case for those Palestinians who actively imagine themselves returning on a more permanent basis, although as already mentioned, it is unclear whether they would actually be able to settle in a future Palestinian state. Even those Palestinians with Greek citizenship in Athens, such as Tariq, who are more settled in Athens strongly believe in the salience of self-determination and statehood, despite the fact that they do not see themselves returning to live in a future Palestinian state. For them, it is the principles surrounding the cause that matter. Sa’id (25, student, see also Appendix Six) illustrates the complexity of the issues surrounding the acquisition of citizenship very well. He points out institutional barriers and opportunities to citizenship strategies carried out in order to improve Palestinian lives:

*So, they [Palestinians] go to these [Western] countries, they say they’re going to stay 3 years. If they have problems with the Israeli government, prosecution or anything, they know that when they leave that they cannot go back to see their family with the Palestinian passport they have. So then they ask for asylum and as soon as they get the citizenship they go back.”*

Palestinians who have lived in or have come from Jordan and have Jordanian citizenship do not necessarily find it any easier to enter Israel or Palestine.<sup>14</sup> As Sa’id, who has Jordanian citizenship, points out: “I’m not

---

<sup>13</sup> For those Palestinians involved in current or former political activities, the situation is much more difficult. As Tariq’s case above illustrates, Greek citizenship is no help for these Palestinians. For them, the need for a Palestinian state into which they are allowed to enter may be even greater.

<sup>14</sup> Palestinians make up around 70% of the Jordanian population. Even though Palestinians who fled there were granted Jordanian citizenship, there are differences in opinion as to whether or not they are perceived as second class citizens or not (for more on this, see Karmi and Cotran 1999). There are Palestinians in the West Bank who also have Jordanian citizenship, given to them when Jordan was in control of the West Bank before 1967.



allowed to go. I have to get another citizenship in order to go.” His personal strategy to overcome this is studying political science to become a diplomat, in which case he believes “the Israelis won’t be able to touch me”. It is of course, very ironic that many Palestinians appear to need Western state citizenship before they are allowed to enter their homeland and this is something that many Palestinians in Athens seem to find unfair.

The acquisition of formal citizenship from a Western country can also help Palestinians feel politicised, empowered and able to participate politically. Mustafa (42, unemployed) notes how his Palestinian friends with Greek citizenship are in a better position to participate politically than he is as a non-Greek:

*Of course I would like to be involved here politically. I am politicised and politically minded and as I said in the future I may go back and I would participate politically there but now I can't really living here. I would like to participate like I see my Greek friends doing and of course I think there are quite a few Palestinians who have Greek citizenship who have run for Parliament and others who are in the Mayors Office, so it is possible, but they have Greek nationality and I don't.*

As Mustafa says, a few Palestinians with Greek citizenship have become politicians and mayors but their role appears to be far from straightforward and potentially even more delicate. Although they arguably have the most power politically to effect change, they are undoubtedly caught between the intricacies and debates within local Greek politics and their constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’. As Greek nationals in public positions they have to show their commitment to Greece and some, therefore, may have changed their Palestinian political commitment in favour of political advancement in Greece. In the process, however, the fact that they are of Palestinian origin may inadvertently or subtly bring the political and material issues surrounding the Palestinian cause to a wider Greek audience.

Acquiring the citizenship of a western country can make Palestinians who are not involved in the formal political sphere feel more able to participate



politically, advocate the cause and facilitate their potential return to Palestine or the Middle East. Fadila (30, housewife) describes how her Canadian citizenship helped her and husband Majid feel more organised and politically active when they lived there, compared to Greece: “we felt we were helping more in Canada and it is easier there because things are more organised and we are Canadian citizens so at least you have the potential to get involved and influence politics”. She also feels their citizenship may help them return to Palestine:

*It is easier with our Canadian citizenship to return and you know we were thinking last year of going to the West Bank or Gaza, so that we could be on Palestinian land, at least, even if it's not exactly where we're from – this wouldn't bother us, but at the moment the situation is very difficult there.*

They both still feel Palestinian despite their Canadian citizenship. Majid (36, FCE) explains:

*We have never lived in Palestine, but it is where we are from...we will always be Palestinian...if you were Greek, lets say and you went to live in France, for example and you even got French citizenship, you would still feel Greek wouldn't you. You wouldn't feel French, like the Greeks who live abroad – they still feel Greek don't they?*

For Palestinians in Athens, such strategies of citizenship acquisition appear to be decoupling relationships between (Greek, Canadian or Jordanian, for example) citizenship and (Palestinian) ‘identity’. In other words, many Palestinians interviewed still feel Palestinian regardless of their formal citizenship status. As Jamal (34, FCE) points out in response to a question on where he feels he belongs:

*I don't want to give up my belonging, that I am Palestinian. I love my country; I love being Palestinian. I love my homeland. This is something I cannot give up. If they would give me any nationality or any kind of compensation I would not*



*give it away because it's not for sale; it cannot be changed. It's a human right to feel that you belong to some place.*

Jamal also illustrates the important intimate relationships between homeland, belonging, 'national identity' citizenship and future statehood, which create and will probably continue to create a variety of complex problems for Palestinians in Athens. Although Jamal appears to be advocating the decoupling of citizenship and 'national identity', elsewhere he also stresses the need for Palestinians to have a state to which to formally belong and hence reasserts the coupling of citizenship and 'national identity'. This latter point highlights a very important issue, which Ibrahim (32, construction worker) also alludes to:

Liz: So would you ever get Greek citizenship?

Ibrahim: *I wouldn't have a problem getting it. Getting it doesn't change where you're from and who you are though. I would still feel Palestinian. I could become Greek and get involved here and do everything Greeks do but people can belong to two countries.*

Having the formal citizenship of a Western country appears to hold many benefits for Palestinians. At the same time, it can strengthen views that a formal Palestinian state is needed as they see the material benefits formal citizenship status may potentially provide. However, the fact that they may still feel like 'outsiders' despite their formal citizenship status also encourages them to promote a Palestinian state for Palestinians, in order to counter such feelings of alienation and difference. This may help explain why Palestinians with a defined citizenship status in Greece also actively advocate the Palestinian cause. Thus, for diasporic groups and individuals with citizenship of the country in which they live (and with access to rights and a good standard of living), the perceived need for self-determination and the ability to belong to a state as non-minority citizens with the 'correct' cultural, social and ethnic 'identity' and characteristics is powerful and unsurprising. There is evidence of a pragmatic decoupling of citizenship and 'national identity' in Greece but at the same time, many



respondents also feel the need for citizenship based around constructions of Palestinian ‘identity’ within a future Palestinian state. As a result, there appears to be both a coupling and decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’.

### **Strategic ambivalence: the coupling and decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’**

Theoretical notions of the decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’ are useful, but the complex ways in which such processes are occurring in reality need to be explored and understood. In different ways, both Jamal and Ibrahim (mentioned above) point to certain issues associated with the decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’, which for the Palestinian diaspora in Athens, cannot be ignored. Jamal’s insistence on keeping his feelings of ‘Palestinian-ness’ and of belonging to Palestine alive (despite the acquisition of non-Palestinian citizenship), whilst at the same time, claiming the need for a Palestinian state for Palestinians appears to illustrate that for Palestinians in Athens, a coupling as well as a decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’ is occurring. Such processes of expressing both at different times may be seen as forms of strategic ambivalence.

The notion and realities of the decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’ may be double-edged. As this chapter has shown, Palestinians in Athens appear to construct and encourage arbitrary relationships and associations between Palestinian ‘identity’ and citizenship within a future Palestinian state as part of their politicised advocacy of the Palestinian cause, in order to bring about an end to feelings and realities of suffering and injustice. At the same time, however, this also seems to encourage the disassociation between Greek citizenship status and feelings of belonging to Greece, as they are emotionally, socially and politically connected to ‘there’. Therefore, while strategies of citizenship acquisition may serve to decouple citizenship and ‘national identity’, at the same time, they may help reconnect ties Palestinians have with the homeland, as with their new citizenship status, they may be able to visit Palestine more easily. While there may be a material decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’ in Greece, there is often still a symbolic coupling of the two ‘there’ in Palestine.



The assumption that there are neatly defined ways in which Palestinians may live and possess citizenship status ‘here’ and belong ‘there’ ignores feelings of ‘in-between-ness’ and ambivalence many Palestinians in Athens also experience, as well as how problematic such liminality may be for them to deal with on an everyday basis. As Ibrahim points out above, theoretical notions of the decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’ need to take into account the complexities of home and belonging for those in diaspora. It cannot be assumed that Palestinians are rationally and simplistically dismantling the relationships between formal citizenship status, belonging and ‘national identity’. Palestinians in Athens appear to be both reproducing and deconstructing the relationships between citizenship and ‘national identity’ simultaneously. As Stasilius and Bakin (1997: 119) have pointed out in their criticism of de-territorialized approaches to citizenship: “citizenship [as well as ‘identity’ and the relationships between them] is negotiated, and is, therefore, unstable, constructed and re-constructed historically” across and within borders. There can be no simplistic notions of what constitutes the decoupling of citizenship and ‘national identity’ for diasporic Palestinians in Athens; their negotiations of ‘Palestinian-ness’, ‘shared consciousness’, citizenship, home and belonging are situated and dynamic.

The partial and complex dismantling of the relationships between citizenship and ‘national identity’ appear related to feelings of hybridity and fluidity. Feeling ‘here’ and ‘there’ or ‘in-between’ as a result of living in diaspora can help break down associations between ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ identity, citizenship and statehood despite the perceived need of political attempts to connect them for the sake of advocating the Palestinian cause and self-determination. Although such attempts may be understandable, in reality, the multiple subjectivities and positionings of Palestinians in Athens illustrate how difficult and conflict ridden the merging between the personal and political can be.<sup>15</sup> The tensions between political displays of ‘unity’, optimistic and resistant commitment to the Palestinian cause and personal feelings of

---

<sup>15</sup> As outlined in Chapter Five, there are tensions between personal feelings of ambivalence, disunity and the need to appear united and portray a strong and defined Palestinian ‘identity’ for political reasons.



helplessness and despair are, therefore, also evident in discussions of the relationships between citizenship, 'national identity' and statehood.

The issues of refugee status and the claiming of political asylum provide another example of these tensions. Although many Palestinians in Greece could be theoretically considered refugees, most are not in practical terms. This is through either choice or necessity. Some Palestinians, such as Issam (43, engineer and Leader of 'old' GUPW) actively choose not to be considered refugees:

Issam: *All the Palestinians, we don't want to ask for political asylum.*

Liz: Why is that?

Issam: *For lots of reasons. We are not escaping from our state. We have a national problem, because after the political asylum, they will try to get the citizenship of this country and stay here and you know and we are trying to keep them far way from this and sometimes to get political asylum, you have to confess something which is false, to give a reason why you need political asylum. Sometimes, all this information, it doesn't go just to the United Nations, it goes to the police of different countries and it's like our people supplying information. We want to stay away from this circle. We want to continue encouraging Palestinians to be here legally with the help of the government. We don't need to have political asylum.*

Liz: Can this go on indefinitely though?

Issam: *Yes, Palestinians will get as normal as the others, they may get citizenship, but not political asylum; they are not accepting being given political asylum because Israel is hunting them. There are a lot of Palestinians in this condition. Why do they not give political asylum to the Palestinians in Lebanon or in Jordan? So, it is complicated. I know some cases, where they have whole interrogations and where they are forced to give problems with the Palestinian Authority in order to get it. They don't get it because of the national problem*



*that we have. Palestinians are leaving because they have a problem with the Occupation not because they have problems with their brothers or with Palestinian political groups. They don't have problems with their own people.*

Palestinians are also discouraged by those in power, such as Issam, from claiming asylum in Greece because of the fact that it is seen as a long and arduous process, as well as for the reasons outlined above. Jamal (34, FCE) explains why the process of asylum is so difficult. For him, it is because “they only give political asylum to a few people. They pick and choose. And this is not fair”. In the following extract, Sa'id (25, student) echoes Issam's position and explains why he does not want to be seen as a refugee; it appears to be a mixture of not wanting to be classed as a refugee for political reasons and the fact that the asylum process is perceived as being too long:

Liz: So you could be considered to be a refugee?

Sa'id: *No, no. I don't consider myself as a refugee. It sounds bad.*

Liz: Why?

Sa'id: *Because from my point of view being a refugee means 2 things - you either left your country because of your government or I consider it, it may sound bad but it's like a kind of betrayal. Don't ask me why but...*

Liz: Is it bad to be a refugee then?

Sa'id: *No, it's not bad but in my opinion, for Palestine, I don't consider myself a refugee – if it was in the hands of my government, I would be back but it's not. Maybe in Iraq, there's no problem with them considering themselves as refugees; they are trying to flee away from the problems, the persecutions but in Palestine, I'm not trying to flee from my government. My family left because of the Israelis.*

Liz: But there are a lot of Palestinians who have claimed political asylum.



Sa'id: *In other countries yes, in Greece no – you're not going to find that. From a hundred people, you may find one.*

Liz: Is the reason for this the difficult process?

Sa'id: *Here in Greece, it's a really difficult process. You can claim that you are a political refugee because our country is in war but it's really hard but we look forward to the next years and we say that we're going to have a country one day and we're going to go back, even if it's the state of Israel and the state of Palestine, we're going to be in the state of Palestine. I prefer not to claim that I am a refugee because my papers are not refugee papers since I was about 11.*

For some Palestinians in Athens, refugee status is not desirable politically; it is seen perhaps as giving up on the Palestinian cause and they do not feel the need to claim political asylum, preferring instead to continue living as they have done so, as students or economic migrants. What remains unclear is whether their refusal to accept refugee status will in some way harm their chances of being allowed Palestinian citizenship in the future. At the same time, their lack of refugee status may allow them to bypass any future restrictions or conditions places upon registered Palestinian refugees, such as compensation instead of the Right of Return.

Others Palestinians in Athens are quite happy to have refugee status, although there are very few who do.<sup>16</sup> For example, Nisreen (23, student, President of GUPS) and her family are registered refugees and she has no problem with it:

Liz: So are you a registered refugee?

Nisreen: *Yes, here in Greece, yes I am a refugee.*

---

<sup>16</sup> This is because, as pointed out above, claiming asylum in Greece is perceived by most Palestinians as near impossible. Most potential asylum seekers spoken to wanted to move onto other countries in Western Europe, where they perceived things to be easier and better for them.



Liz: Is that easy to do here, get refugee status?

Nisreen: *Here, no, it's very difficult, maybe in other countries it's easy, but here no, here because they don't have any laws, they ask you – they don't know them, the government places, they don't know them, you know more than they know.*

Liz: So there aren't many Palestinians who are registered refugees then?

Nisreen: *No, those who are married they take it from their wives, because he is married to a Greek woman, they get the nationality, but otherwise, it is not easy.*

Liz: I've heard that it is easy for Palestinians to claim political asylum. Is this true do you think?

Nisreen: *What is political asylum? I am not sure...but even if you get it doesn't help you get, be a Greek citizen, like the refugees, they have a residence permit for 5 years, after, we have it one year, now 5 years and after 5 years they say you have it from 10 years, okay and after that, what, 5 years and 5 years and 5 years, that's stupid, it's like being a Greek citizen.*

Liz: Do you think you will ever get Greek citizenship?

Nisreen: *I'm not interested. You want to give me, okay fine, but it doesn't bother me. I will always feel Palestinian and because with the passport I have now, it's like, you take it but it's for two years, the passport that refugees take, after two years you go and renew it. It says on it Elliniki Dimokratia<sup>17</sup> and so on, but every 2 years we go, it's not a Greek passport, but you can go anywhere you want with that, even Israel, they don't say nothing.*

Liz: So it doesn't prevent you from travelling?

---

<sup>17</sup> 'The Republic of Greece'.



Nisreen: *No, but I don't know about Israel, I don't know if I can go to Palestine.*

Liz: So you've never been there?

Nisreen: *No, I've never tried.*

This testimony is interesting because a note of ambivalence about Nisreen's own position can be detected. On the one hand, she is a registered refugee, but on the other hand, she does not think she has claimed political asylum; it is clearly a confusing situation. She also appears to be talking about asylum as if it is nationality – perhaps this signals the fact that both are merely seen as strategies or ways to remain in Greece legally. At the same time, she appears quite happy to continue living indefinitely in Greece in the position she is in currently. As a refugee, whose family were exiled initially in Lebanon, she is not even sure whether she can go to Palestine. Yet, as the President of the GUPS in Athens, she is politically minded as well as active in advocating the Palestinian cause. She seems to be representative of those Palestinians in Athens who are ambivalent about citizenship and its relationships to 'national identity'. On the one hand, they feel Palestinian and that they should have a state of their own to protect their rights, in principle. On the other hand, they may be quite happy to continue living in Greece with ambiguous or difficult citizenship statuses and not be overly concerned about visiting or returning personally despite recognising the importance of such issues for other Palestinians in diaspora. Again, personal feelings of happiness and adjustment to life in Greece may rest uneasily with political constructions of Palestinian 'identity', 'unity', belonging and returning 'there' that many Palestinians perceive are necessary to attain statehood, which forms part of the cause many feel they have to or want to support.

The situation as regards political asylum and refugee status appears to be very complicated and there are conflicting accounts; what does seem clear, however, is that there are few Palestinians in Greece who are registered refugees. At the same time, many Palestinians in Greece agree, generally speaking, that they are refugees as a group because so many of them are living in exile in



diaspora and lost their land and homeland in the process. Abbas (26, student), despite being from the West Bank, stresses that:

*all Palestinians are refugees and it is politically important that we are seen as refugees, so that something is done to help us, by the UN and the international community. We are refugees because we have been displaced and our land has been taken over and we have no-where to go.*

Abbas highlights the strategic use of names as part of the cause and the importance Palestinians attach to representations of themselves in the process. The notion of the refugee is extremely important ideologically and politically as it allows Palestinians to frame their injustices and hopes for the future in terms of human rights and appeals to such international bodies such as the UN, that transcend the nation-state to a certain extent.

The term Palestinian ‘migrants’ or ‘diaspora’ does not have the same connotation as ‘refugee’, which implies persecution, loss, exile and so forth, all of which are extremely powerful discourses. At the same time, to be a refugee is also to be vulnerable and at the mercy of the country one is living in, but it is also a way to escape problems in the country one is from. As illustrated, it can be seen as unproductive politically, as it may signal or symbolise dissatisfaction with or disconnection to Palestine. The same can also be said of the acquisition of citizenship of Western countries. Both may be seen by Palestinians as attempts to weaken the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian diaspora in Athens clearly reveals the tensions involved in personal strategies to improve livelihoods and feelings of ‘in-between-ness’ and the need to ensure the best for Palestinians as a group of people who are mostly in exile and stateless. Rafiq, (40, restaurant worker) for example, has found that claiming political asylum is a relatively straightforward task but that it is dependent on speaking to and knowing the right people. Incidentally, he is claiming political asylum because he runs the risk of being deported and it is the only alternative he can think of. The claiming of political asylum in his case is, therefore, being employed not in terms of a denial of human rights or persecution but as a strategy for continued but indefinite



existence in Greece; he feels ambivalent about his own feelings of belonging, but is an active advocate of the Palestinian cause.

A positive repercussion of the realisation that the relationships between citizenship and 'national identity' are unstable and arbitrary can be seen in Palestinian understandings of how the lives of Jews and Palestinians are intricately connected. As a result, some Palestinians in Athens feel that a single-state solution to the present situation in Palestine, in which Jews and Palestinians live together and tolerate their differences and those of others too, is best and may be a potential step in such a direction:

Liz: What are your hopes for the future in Palestine?

Faeq: *I think that the future should be a mixture of both; I think we should live together. We are both mixed anyway; we are joined whether we like it or not, so we should have a country for everyone. Eventually I think this will happen. Many Palestinians and Israelis would like this. There are a few people in Israel who control everything with absurd ideas.* (Faeq, 45, FCE)

Ahmed (34, FCE) also appears convinced that such a solution is possible, as do other Palestinians in Athens:

*I think the most important issues facing Palestinians at the moment are the struggle for the Right of Return, a stop to the building of settlements, the issue of Jerusalem and the wall that is being built at the moment. The ultimate goal, I think should be all of Palestine for both Jews and Palestinians together. I think that if they create a Palestinian state in a two-state solution, it will be so small that it won't survive. It will be too weak. It won't be practical and it will not be a fulfilment for all the hopes we have had for all this time. My ultimate hope is to be able to go to Jaffa and to anywhere and everywhere there in historical Palestine with the same rights as the Jews; to have equal rights with them, so that we can all live together. However, a Palestinian state is a step in the right direction, but I am not hopeful that there will be a state. There will only be isolated ghettos or islands. This Apartheid wall that they are building has to be*



*pulled down. The thing is there, they have to be united in order to survive. It's a matter of life and death.*

Liz: Would you be happy with a two-state solution?

*Ahmed: Well, I think, let's live together and create a democratic state, where both Israelis and Palestinians can live together. Israel will not go away; we have to live together, with everyone enjoying religious freedom. And I think that many others share my views. It's not easy to forget where you come from or all the problems and the suffering you and your people have had to go through. I really don't think a two-state solution will work because what you will get and what you are already getting is the creation of Palestinian islands or ghettos in an Israeli sea where you need a ferry to cross from one island to the other. It is impossible.*

Ahmed's use of the word 'ghettos' is interesting; he purposefully relates present Palestinian suffering, injustices and hardship that he feels Israelis are responsible for with the ghettos Jews themselves suffered in. He inadvertently suggests that the victim has become the aggressor, creating, in turn, new victims. At the same time, however, his rationale in using such an argument is important, because it highlights the interconnected lives and fates of Jews and Palestinians within a highly contested, problematic piece of land that is emotionally and symbolically invested. In relation to this, Shapiro (2000) uses Ronit Matalon's novel 'The One Facing Us' (1998) to depict such an understanding - that Jews and Arabs are inextricably tied in a Levantine world. Others, such as Alcalay (1993 – cited in Shapiro 2000) have also used the contemporary Hebrew novel to imagine "a shared Arab-Jewish cultural formation – that modern Hebrew was invented to erase" (Shapiro 2000: 88). Mustafa (42, unemployed) also points to the importance of removing boundaries:

*I think there needs to be a solution that can satisfy both parties. So many innocent people are dying. We are fighting for the right to live, for our human rights. The thing is you can't get rid of a people or have one country win at the*



*expense of the other. We have accepted unjust negotiations like Oslo and the road map. We want peace, because I don't know how long the Palestinians can take it. The Israelis have the power to do whatever they want but we have to depend on the UN, Europe and the rest of the world for help and support. We also depend on Israeli public opinion to understand and realise their point of view and to pressurise their government in order to influence Sharon...I don't have anything against Jews. I have Jewish friends, but Israelis who came and settled are different. You know, I believe there should be no borders anywhere. They don't do any good. They are like obstacles. People should be free to move around wherever they want.*

Liz: It's ironic then, isn't it that this whole conflict is about borders, defining concrete borders and a defined territory called Palestine. Aren't borders important in some contexts?

Mustafa (Silence): *Yes, you need to define areas, but they shouldn't be restrictive or limit travelling.*

The material and symbolic dismantling of borders and of negatively constructed differences between people and the consequent recognition of a joint destiny within the same land are very powerful notions. The potential, however, for the creation of new boundaries, tensions and constructions of difference is always present. For Palestinians in Athens to come to such conclusions involves an understanding of the importance of diversity, tolerance and the instability and multiplicity of negotiated identities, as well as the decoupling of citizenship and 'national identity'. This also highlights why notions of 'shared consciousness' may be more useful, as shared feelings of belonging and attachment, which are not based on exclusive relationships between distinct identities and territories, can be taken into account. At the same time, political advocacy of the Palestinian cause appears to demand the static use of a more homogenised Palestinian 'identity' and 'unity' with which to create a Palestinian state, as a result of Palestinian exile, displacement and their need for justice and rights, which many Palestinians can also relate to. They are, therefore, also advocating the coupling



between citizenship, statehood and ‘national identity’ out of necessity, despite the tensions and conflicts involved in such incongruities. This may manifest into complex processes and negotiations of strategic ambivalence, where perceptions of the relationships between citizenship and Palestinian ‘identity’ are dynamic aspects of what it means to be Palestinian in Athens.

## Conclusions

Although the processes of citizenship are increasingly becoming de-territorialised in manner, they are still state-based. The pertinence of nationalism and the institutional constraints imposed by countries (Bailey *et al.* 2002) and how the lives of those in diaspora are affected as a result must also be recognised and cannot be ignored. As Itzigsohn (2000: 1148) stresses:

*While there is undoubtedly a process of decoupling of nation, territory and citizenship related to migration, this process is for now far from superceding the territoriality bounded state as the main locus for the exercise of citizenship rights and for participating in political processes.*

Those in diaspora, as citizens or not, may be in a difficult position as they realise the importance of cross-border connections and boundary transgressions, but at the same time are limited and hindered by the borders protected and enforced by nation-state institutions and the coupling of citizenship, and ‘national identity’. Despite social and cultural lives, emotions and experiences that may be hybrid and ‘in-between’, Palestinians in Athens understand that access to the rights and benefits (and ease of mobility) that they see others around them (such as Greeks) having are tied to the nation-state, formal citizenship status and ‘national identity’. It has to be remembered that ‘national identity’ itself is a construction, which is situated as well as dynamic. This chapter has illustrated how Palestinians in Athens may construct and deconstruct relationships between citizenship and ‘national identity’ for particular politicised and material reasons in and in relation to particular locations.



It may be more useful to re-conceptualise states (and peoples, religions, cultures and so forth) as interrelated and not as distinct and separated, while at the same time providing protection and citizenship to the people living within them that is not based on exclusive notions of 'national identity' or 'ethnicity' or 'religion'. People feel 'attached' to where they live but such constructions of belonging have to be explored. They also need to be exposed as interconnected to other times, spaces and peoples. Attachments to locations are not necessarily problematic. It is only perhaps when people perceive such attachments to be under threat that conflicts may arise and such threats are normally seen to be caused by movement of people into such areas. It is the role of the state as it currently stands, however, and its insistence on 'national identity' and 'national heritage' and so forth that may be accentuating the differences that inevitably exist between people from different parts of the world but also within states themselves in negative and unproductive ways. The intention here however, is not to romanticise the world before the creation of states or to suggest an abandonment of forms of state-related governance but to encourage explorations and understandings of people, places and political actions as connected and hybrid. In turn, this adds to current re-conceptualisations of current western-centric and often arbitrary notions of citizenship and its relationships with 'national identity'. It is within diasporic spaces (discussed in the following chapter) that Palestinians struggle to position themselves as culturally and socially 'in-between' whilst politically and strategically advocating unity, Palestinian 'identity' and the Palestinian cause. Their experiences and perceptions of citizenship as well as the relationships between citizenship and 'national identity' may serve to help appreciate and explore the complexity and relevance of such changing relationships in the contemporary world.



## **Processes of resistance and advocacy within contested diasporic spaces**

This chapter examines contested and gendered informal diasporic spaces in which Palestinians in Athens, with and without formal citizenship status, are advocating the Palestinian cause and in the process, able to be politically active, feel empowered and resistant. To begin with, a brief outline of positive and negative Palestinian perceptions and realities of political advocacy as helping is provided. This is followed by an in-depth focus on specific diasporic spaces and political activities within them are concentrated on, starting with demonstrations and cultural events, the Parikia (or ‘community’ house), followed by the Unions, embassy and finally, Palestinian houses.

### **Introduction**

For many Palestinians in Athens, diasporic spaces are culturally, socially and politically important, for symbolic and material reasons. Strategic and dynamic processes of resistance and advocacy occur within gendered and contested diasporic spaces that may not necessarily be formal or official. Diasporic statelessness, exile, cross-border connections and non-citizenship have different outcomes in terms of feelings of empowerment and potential engagement in advocacy and material political activities. Thus, there may be varying perceptions of agency, despair, apathy, inclusions and exclusions amongst the Palestinian diaspora in Athens as a result of involvement within such spaces.

### **Political spaces and empowerment**

The fact that the Palestinian cause appears to be well-known and supported in Greece strongly suggests that Palestinians in Athens have been and are being politically active because of their politicised constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’ even if they talk about what they do as simply ‘helping’, or ‘doing what they



can' and not as being politically active. Although advocacy of the Palestinian cause through 'helping' and lobbying in diasporic spaces can be theorised as forms of political resistance and empowerment, and Palestinians see themselves as politicised, they may not necessarily perceive themselves as politically active. This may be because they associate political activism and participation with formal and official political spaces, which they as non-citizens and stateless, feel excluded from. Non-citizens or those with difficult relationships to the state in which they are living are often ignored in studies on the relationship between citizenship and political participation. As Kofman (1995: 134, 123) argues, "there are obviously some groups that are far less able to participate" ... "immigrants and those with ambiguous relationships to territory have been left outside the solidarity and communities found at the heart of many of the normative models of citizenship". Faulks (2000: 142) also stresses that the lack of official citizenship also leads to a lack of a political voice and, therefore, of political rights, which means that "non-citizens...are objects of state policy rather than active participants".

Political spaces in which people find themselves are crucial to notions of empowerment, which involves:

*moving out of constrained places and isolated spaces, widening the scope for action and multiplying potential sites for engagement, and about growing in an organic, self-realizing way – in confidence, in capacity, in wellbeing.* (Cornwall 2002, quoted in McEwan 2005: 5)

Cornwall appears to stress that empowerment can only occur if a person is aware of the positive aspects of their political actions and that it is more likely to take place within spaces that are more visible and inclusive. Therefore, the extent to which Palestinians in Athens feel their diasporic spaces are inclusive or exclusive is crucial. Cornwall's views also appear to mirror Massey's (1999: 283) plea for spaces to be perceived as multidimensional, interrelated and open-ended:



*space/spatiality...is the sphere of the meeting up (or not) of multiple trajectories, the sphere where they co-exist, affect each other, may come into conflict. It is the sphere both of their independence (co-existence) and of their interrelation. Subjects/objects are constructed through the space of these interrelations...and, precisely because it is the product of relations, relations which are active processes, material and embedded, practices which have to be carried out, space is in the process of becoming. It is always being made.*

This has important implications for theoretical understandings of diasporic political spaces (and identities) as bounded, unbounded, continuously dislocated and disrupted. If the ‘opening up’ of spaces is integral to empowerment, the cross-border connections and networks that Palestinians in diaspora rely on mean that the ‘open-ness’ and transgressive qualities of diasporic spaces (as a result of these connections) may allow them to feel empowered within such spaces. Processes of resistance and advocacy cannot be seen in isolation to such cross-border relations.

#### The hybrid subject, cross-border and postcolonial/colonial connections

It is important to note the connectivity of diasporic spaces and the informal networks between them in Athens, but also between these spaces, other Palestinian diasporic spaces in the Middle East and politicised spaces within Palestine. Formal, semi-official and informal/unofficial diasporic spaces and networks can, therefore, merge at particular times. This appears to demonstrate the ‘relational’ sense of place authors such as Massey (1999) and Amin (2004) have theorised. Connections between people and places need to be analysed as relational because cross-border networks are increasingly connecting spaces that may be geographically separate. For instance, Palestinians in Athens may have more connections to towns, cities and villages in the West Bank, Gaza and around the Middle East than to people and places within Athens and Greece that are closer to them physically. Processes of resistance and advocacy in Athens have to be seen in relation and as connected to events and perceptions (and



processes of resistance and advocacy) that are occurring in Palestine and the Middle East even if they take on different forms.

Bhabha (1994) also stresses the connectivity of colonial and postcolonial times and spaces in his notion of 'Third Space', in which the subject of change and resistance is hybrid and necessarily 'in-between' the colonial and postcolonial. As Chapter Two discusses, the lives of Palestinians in Greece may be seen as postcolonial in the sense that they are not physically living under occupation. At the same time, their connections to what they see as a colonised homeland stresses the merging of colonial and postcolonial worlds. The viewing of strategies of resistance as postcolonial means that as Palestinians in Athens are physically disconnected from oppression or occupation and the situation in Palestine, they may be more able to engage in resistance strategies that are less hindered by or attached to colonialism.

Bhabha's Third Space of 'enigmatic questioning' celebrates the unstable, original and subversive nature of the subject, which refuses to be categorized or to belong completely to either 'here' or 'there', the colonial or postcolonial world. Its strength lies in its hybridity or "creative ambivalence" (Lindholm Schulz 2003) and highlights the positive repercussions of 'in-between-ness' in terms of feelings of resistance and empowerment. One can view hybrid diasporic spaces as sites of resistance in which Palestinians may become active participants involved in shaping their own futures and are not passive victims. The "recovery of those hidden spaces occupied and invested with their own meaning, by the colonial underclass" (Crush 1994: 337) as well as their connections to their colonisers appear integral to understanding and exploring the realities of postcolonial resistance. At the same time, however, the diversity and power relations within the 'colonial underclass' have to be taken into account, despite their perceived need to consolidate a subject-position with which to posit change.

As outlined above, Massey points to the potential for inclusion and exclusion within spaces, which may be seen as the result of positive and negative constructions and realities of difference and power inequalities. As Palestinians strategically negotiate their multiple subjectivities, cross-border connections, power relations and the need for unity within diversity tensions can result over



difference and representation (as discussed in Chapter Five). Thus, the diasporic spaces in which such politicised negotiations occur as Palestinians advocate their cause (and engage in what could be called political activism) may be perceived as inclusive and exclusive, with repercussions in terms of feelings of empowerment, marginalisation, and helplessness. Therefore, diasporic spaces in which Palestinians may be placed very differently can be seen as hindering and/or encouraging perceptions of advocacy and political participation.

In reality, processes of decolonisation (in the form of postcolonial resistance or anti-colonial liberation struggles) are complex as well as contested (Lambert 2005) and played out spatially and temporally. The times, spaces and tensions involved are crucial in understanding and exploring the intricacies of such processes. For Palestinians in Athens, diasporic spaces ‘here’ in Greece may act as the starting point for resistance and empowerment (usually perceived as the resolving of the Palestinian cause) and are dependant upon ‘there’ (in Palestine). The connections between Greece and Palestine result in constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’ and processes of resistance and advocacy that can be seen as ‘in-between’ and ambivalent. Palestinian connections to ‘there’ (and to one another) may encourage political advocacy of the Palestinian cause, but at the same time, non-citizenship and feelings of ‘in-between-ness’ can also trigger feelings of ambivalence, insecurity and loss that are seen as problematic and counter-productive to Palestinian ‘unity’ and resistance.

### **Outlining Palestinian advocacy as ‘helping’**

This section provides a brief outline of how Palestinian understandings of advocacy as ‘helping’ are complex and hard to generalise about because there are both positive and negative factors involved. The educating of others (and Greeks in particular) about the Palestinian cause within diasporic spaces is seen as one of the major (and few) ways many respondents feel they can help fellow Palestinians, by their spreading their understanding of what is meant by the Palestinian cause to as many people as possible. Maha (29, housewife) explains:

*I think it's very important for Palestinians to spread the word, to give the other side, our side of the story. I mean the people here in Europe are influenced by*



*Jewish people and the media, they don't tell both sides of the story and this is our role, to try and get people to listen to our story, so it's very important and it's part of the struggle.*

Maha's statement of the importance of educating Greeks and Europeans can be seen as a direct link to the situation in Palestine that she and other Palestinians in Athens are negotiating and portraying as part of their advocacy of the Palestinian cause. Advocating and helping 'here' in Greece forms a way to remain connected and committed politically to Palestine whilst in diaspora. Maha's need to 'struggle' and 'spread the word' can also be seen as an active form of resistance to what she feels are powerful Jewish discourses and narratives within the media on the situation in Israel/Palestine.

An interesting, symbolic and important political aspect of diasporic spaces is the perceived freedom of Palestinians in diaspora in Athens to speak and act in them. Many respondents talk of how grateful they are for the freedom they feel in Greece, psychologically and practically, which they may also see as related to Greek support they receive. Their perceptions of freedom may be seen as the prerequisite they need psychologically to feel that they are being politically active. The freedom they talk of seems to be symptomatic of their physical separation from what they perceive as the site of colonialism (Israel/Palestine) and oppression but despite possible agency, they are still very much affected by and connected to it. For those in diaspora, such as Palestinians in Athens, who feel they have been persecuted and discriminated against, and who want to try and change their own lives and the lives of others, such perceptions of freedom may be crucial symbolically. Palestinians may see such freedom as related to notions of citizenship and democracy and for them, it may be the combination of all three that give them hope and willingness to resist and be politically active. The following discussions depict this sense of freedom, which many interviewees appear to find empowering and has allowed some, such as Sa'id (25, student) and Lina (38, businesswoman), to feel more secure and able to think about their situation as Palestinians in exile more easily:



Sa'id: *Well, I want to leave but I want to leave to work but I know that anywhere else in the world, I'm not going to be as free as here.*

Liz: When you say free, what do you mean?

Sa'id: *I mean, free to express myself; I can do whatever I want. I have no problems; the Greeks don't look at me as if uh, he's you know, the Greeks feel that we're related from way back in Crete 1000 years ago and when I talk to Greeks they say did you know that there were Palestinians in Crete? The Greek people are really into politics, you see them marching in the Israeli newspapers.*

*I am free in Greece to shout. I am very free to cry, to let the people know how much I am sad, how much I am angry about all these children that they are killing down there every day and every hour. No, we can express ourselves here, our feelings.* (Lina)

Other respondents, such as Mustafa, (42, unemployed) admit that they feel they are more able to think about the situation there objectively as a result of the peace of mind they get from freedom of expression:

*You have to be open-minded and objective in order to understand all points of view and you know I learnt to be like this here. Before when I was in the West Bank and I think it's the same for others too who are stuck there, facing very difficult daily circumstances, who are under tremendous pressure. It's very hard to think openly and objectively there because you are so close to the problems, the stress, you are in it all the time and it doesn't allow you to think or analyse things properly and you are not free to express yourself. You are always restricted and this influences a person and their mind and how they think about things hugely. It's different here.*

Living in Greece, with the freedoms it provides and the support Greeks have for Palestinians, has also encouraged some Palestinians to feel more able to advocate their cause through informal diasporic spaces as well as through personal



strategies of resistance that are a mixture of different diasporic spaces and processes of advocacy and are hard to generalise about. For example, Mahmud's (24, student) testimony (Appendix Seven) illustrates such a personal strategy and its complex relationships with his everyday life in Greece:

*I'll have to see what the situation is like there; here, everyone is after their own best interest aren't they? Even though I would really love to go back and give something to my country. I came here on a scholarship, my country sent me here on a scholarship so I came as a result of my government, so sometimes I think that even if I stay here, I want to do something to help. I have already talked to the representative of the company that I work for about opening a department there and seeing what we can do from here to help.*

Mahmud explains that particular events made him start thinking about helping and advocating. For him, this has meant joining the GUPS, but at the same time, he is also trying to help using the profession he is studying and the contacts he has made through working. Many respondents see lack of time as a major restriction to engaging in advocacy and only those who are extremely committed find the time to help on more than a superficial basis. It does appear, however, that at times of specific need, many Palestinians in Athens are willing to go to great lengths to actively help. Mahmud exemplifies the very real tensions and guilt Palestinians in Athens experience as a result of their hybrid and cross-border connections and existence, how these spur them to get involved politically and also simultaneously depresses them because they feel that they are not doing enough. Yet, they may be doing all they feel they can, given their situation. This does not necessarily stop them from feeling guilty, however, even if it is because they are not going through the daily hardships and fear they perceive Palestinians are going through in the West Bank and Gaza.

Many Palestinians in Athens feel they can help the cause through NGOs such as charities (Greek and Palestinian or a mixture of both), mainly through the giving of money, food, clothes and attendance at charity events. Involvement in such activities shows active support for fellow Palestinians perceived as suffering in Palestine; in the process, this may help them feel that they are part of



the resistance to what they feel is Israeli aggression and occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. Advocacy and helping can also be seen as concrete ways for Palestinians in Athens to feel connected to a homeland they may never have visited. Individual financial situations highly influence how involved and politically active Palestinians are able to feel. To help financially, Palestinians must have money to spare, so those with insecure or low-income jobs find it hard. Therefore, the extent to which Palestinians may be politically active within diasporic spaces is dependant on personal factors such as financial and citizenship statuses. Lina (38, businesswoman), despite the freedom she feels (outlined above) and the fact that does a great deal to help fellow Palestinians, outlines the fact that such help and advocacy is not straightforward. Thus, her perceptions of helping are both positive and negative:

*There are many Palestinians who have money, so they don't have the problem to think everyday how to get money to survive and many others, they don't have money and the first thing that comes to their mind – they're worrying how to get money, to live, so these people, the first thing that is on their mind is how to support their families financially and then in their free time they participate in other things, but in general I can see that most of the Palestinians here are very close to each other. They help each other a lot, a lot, but even me and most of my friends we hear about a family who came from Palestine and we don't know them and they are having some trouble by finding a house or putting their kids in school. Many people would like to help.*

Her feelings of advocacy and 'helping' are dynamic and hard to pin down ranging from optimism, pessimism to guilt; this is neatly illustrated by the different view she gives later on in the same discussion:

*Lina: I wonder if we are helping in the right way or if we are helping through the right people? Or if talking about our cause is enough, do you see?*

Liz: Yes. Does that make you feel helpless?



Lina: *Yes, like Elizabeth, I would like to put every month say one or two hundred euro to support one family there, I would do that because I can afford it but I'm not sure that this money would go to this family but you're never sure.*

Liz: So there are no organised charities?

Lina: *There are, but I wish I could talk to the people face to face to make sure that they are really taking this money or they are taking part of it, you see, because there are many, many families in Palestine who are poor and originally they were not poor, they had land, they had properties, but things are not really coming to them or let's say not the amount that we hear is going down, see what I mean?*

Liz: Do you think that Palestinians here could do more?

Lina: *No. I believe that we should keep on trying or keep on supporting and when I said that there's always more we can do, I meant continuously, to continue support because really there are many Palestinian families who need supporting big time. And there is much more we could do politically, I suppose, although it's hard being here.*

Positive views of diasporic political spaces and advocacy have to be counterbalanced with the fact that Palestinians in Athens may also find diasporic spaces exclusive, which contribute to feelings of helplessness, disillusionment and political apathy. Ibrahim's testimony (Appendix Eight) illustrates the complexities involved in advocacy and helping and represents one of the most negative views encountered. For example, in response to a question on whether demonstrations are helpful, he says:

*Yes, but what good do they do? Do you see them doing any good?*

Liz: Perhaps people feel that they are doing something or they feel empowered in some way.



Ibrahim: *Okay, perhaps they may have some influence in the future. So a leader who comes into power will know perhaps that he will not have the support of certain groups of people who have demonstrated their opinions. But there's not that many and they don't do that much because things are so controlled, you know what I mean. It's like the Karayiozi<sup>1</sup> – it's all a show, we are puppets of the state. So I don't really believe that much in demonstrations although I have taken part in a few that have led to the Israeli embassy but it doesn't do anything. The struggle, for me is when you give 50 euros to a struggling family in Palestine so that they can live for 10 days and resist for longer – this is true support. This actually helps people – because there is a lack of food, medicine. Just saying I'm on your side, that doesn't do anything. Okay his heart is in the right place. But what good is saying that I am with you when the other person's starving?*

Ibrahim's testimony illustrates the perceived difficulties surrounding involvement in overtly political activities, the fact that Palestinians may want to help but feel unable to and that they have different perceptions of what this help should actually entail. This disunity is also depicted by Tamara (32, researcher), who highlights the fact that although many Palestinians admit they feel politicised, they are not usually aware that they are being politically active through the informal (political) activities and spaces they are involved in:

*I do feel that I am politicised. I wish I could do more but I don't feel bad about what I am doing at the moment because I am just at the beginning of my career, I'm just getting established. I would like to be an activist though; that would give me great satisfaction. But we go to demonstrations. We sometimes help people financially, or children who need help in institutions. There are many NGOs and Unions and there is a lot of networking going on between them there and they have many supporters like when there was the first Intifada, you had a lot of student fundraising I remember. It's hard sometimes to support others because although you want to feel an affinity with them, you can't necessarily because*

---

<sup>1</sup> Karayiozi is a puppet character in a popular Greek satirical puppet theatre of the same name.



*they have different backgrounds socially and financially which makes it difficult, especially here where you don't have the closeness between Palestinians that you find there. We are more isolated here.*

Therefore, advocacy can be problematic. Many respondents feel that a lack of organisation and formality is associated with advocacy and helping; this may also be a factor influencing whether Palestinians feel they are doing anything useful to help as well as feelings of being politically active. As a young student recently arrived from Jordan, Karim feels unable to help:

Liz: Do you feel able to do anything to help the situation there?

Karim: *No, not really. I can't do anything to help the situation there. Every beginning is difficult and I am still at the beginning so there is nothing I can do to help. Later on, I will do more. I want to go there, to help, to do whatever I can, but the future is uncertain. Nobody knows what will happen there and nobody knows what the future will be so I don't what I will do or what I will be able to do to help.*

Liz: Do you feel hopeless living here; that you're not able to do anything to help?

Karim: *Yes, I do feel that I can't say or do much. I talk about things to my friends and we discuss what we see, what's happening, but what can we really do? Okay, we go to demonstrations. We can only talk and discuss our cause. I suppose the only things we can do is tell people what has happened to us to show the world what what's really going on there. We cannot get involved in politics here like the Greeks. Like with the presentation the students did before Christmas. They tried to educate people about the Palestinians, who they are, the problems we are facing and our culture so that people understand.*

Therefore, despite the fact that he goes to demonstrations, talks to Greeks and tries to 'educate' them, (and which can be seen as processes of political



advocacy) he still feels hopeless because he does not view the informal spaces and activities he is involved in as politically useful.

Processes of resistance and advocacy have to be put into context as they are dynamic, and often dependant many positive and negative factors such as crises and the situation in Palestine and the Middle East (Shawa, personal communication, 2004) as well as support by those in the host country. In the Palestinian context in Athens, helping one's fellow Palestinians is a politicised act, which cannot be separated from other social and cultural aspects of 'Palestinian-ness'. Conceptualising resistance and political advocacy as dynamic spatial and temporal processes is important as this highlights how power relations, differences, similarities and tensions involved may be negotiated as unstable and ambivalent. This then allows us to potentially dismantle the notion that a defined (national, or group) 'identity' is the prerequisite to political action and that as a result of the fluid Palestinian subjectivities, Palestinians may feel positive and negative, included and excluded, enabled and hindered within informal diasporic spaces as a result of their material political activities. A detailed focus on some of these diasporic spaces may allow further exploration into these issues, highlighting the perceptions, use and repercussions of specific spaces for acts of and processes of resistance and advocacy.

### **Cultural events and demonstrations**

Cultural events and activities that are carried out in a variety of (mostly Greek) venues can be seen as crucial ways in which advocacy in the form of 'educating others' is carried out. For example, an event the researcher attended in December 2003 involved a variety of activities that were cultural, social and political. There was a display of Palestinian dancing, a student presentation on what they called the 'Apartheid Wall' in the West Bank (delivered in Greek), the selling of literature related to the Palestinian cause (such as the 2001 Greek edition of Marwan Bishara's 'Palestine/Israel: Peace or Apartheid'), the reading of Palestinian poetry (in Greek) and a political speech by an embassy official (in Arabic). It was also clearly a social event which enabled Palestinians to socialise and meet other Palestinians they did not normally see, as well as interact with the few Greeks who attended. An example of the Palestinian dancing can be seen in



the photos below, taken at various cultural events in Athens in 2001-2002 in Athens and around Greece.

**Figure 10 – Images of Palestinian dancing**



(Source: booklet titled ‘Athens - Palestine 2002’)



Many interviewees see such dancing as an important cultural link to Palestine, enabling them to engage with what they call ‘real’ forms of Palestinian culture. Lindholm Schulz (2003: 180) stresses that “social gatherings, commemorative events, cultural festivals...and other events [are] intended to preserve a supposedly genuine Palestinian culture” occur in Kuwait. The same may be said of Palestinians in Athens. As Nisreen, (23, President of GUPS) one such Palestinian dancer, points out:

*We are very lucky. We were taught these dances by a Palestinian student from the West Bank and it's very important to us here, because many of us have never been there, we need to learn these things as they are part of our culture that we must not forget. If we do not know about the real customs and traditions and what is going there, then how can we tell people here about our culture and politics? How can we talk about our cause?*

Nisreen highlights the important merging of the cultural and political in such activities and events; the two appear to go hand in hand as crucial aspects in the advocacy of the Palestinian cause, but also in the reinforcement of Palestinian ‘traditions’ and particular meanings of ‘Palestinian-ness’ to Palestinians themselves in Greece. Yet, despite the politicised nature of such events, most Palestinians in Athens do not see them as overtly political. Such events may serve to solidify connections to the homeland, particular notions of what it means to be Palestinian and the need for the continuing existence and advocacy of the Palestinian cause. At the same time, they may serve to strengthen constructions of ‘shared consciousness’ and affinity with fellow Palestinians, in both Athens and Palestine.

Demonstrations constitute diasporic spaces and events where such ‘shared’ feelings may be encouraged. Dina, (17, still at school) for example, describes her feelings as she attends demonstrations. Her active negotiation and embodiment of what it means to be Palestinians as an individual and as part of a group at particular moments in time and space are evident:



*When I go, I don't feel like the person I am normally, who lives in Greece. We were there, in the centre of it and most were men, they were carrying dummies of Bush and Sharon. There wasn't anything violent. It was organised by the embassy. They were ripping up the doll and I did too. Suddenly, I started to feel this rage. It suddenly hit. I really felt I related; I felt so Palestinian at that point. That was so me; that is me. It didn't feel wrong. It's a rage that every single Palestinian feels.*

Here, the personal implications as result of attending such spaces can be seen. The role such diasporic spaces have in helping trigger shared feelings of suffering and injustice is clear.

Most Palestinians in Athens view demonstrations as one of the main ways in which they can physically do something to help the situation there. Bilal (33, FCE) points out his personal reasons behind attending demonstrations:

*I've been to every one – it's like my duty.*

Liz: How do you feel when you go? Do you feel that you're making a difference?

Bilal: *We are trying to say what we need to say, to show that I am not happy with the situation. I am expressing myself and I am showing my support for our President, Yasser Arafat. If there are any changes, we will be the ones to make or to force that change, not America or somebody else; we have to be in charge of our own future.*

Bilal also stresses the issue of political representation (as outlined in Chapter Six). By going to demonstrations, Palestinians feel they are being involved in one of the few overtly political acts they are able to in Athens. As a result, they feel they are representing themselves and their political opinions as well as trying to get their messages of advocacy across to a wider audience. The hindrances to participation in such overtly political spaces must also be noted. For example, although Maha (29, housewife) feels that demonstrations are



important, she also points to surveillance as a problematic barrier to involvement:

*The life is so... the day is running, there is so much to do, you don't have time. The only thing is demonstrations – we can't do anything else. There is nowhere we can go and give our vote, we have no voice and this is what they want and we can't do anything also because the intelligence in Europe, in the US, in the Middle East, it's all connected with each other, so everyone is scared from everyone outside. If a Palestinian wants to say something or do something and go back home, his name will be on the borders, he did this, he did that, so he has a family outside, he is living outside, in Greece, wherever, so this is the way it is, this is the truth.*

Demonstrations are informal diasporic spaces and activities that are very visible to the Greek public. They are set up and organised occasionally, when it is felt they are needed in order to advocate the Palestinian cause and to respond to certain issue. Although grounded in Greece, they cannot be separated from the ongoing political and humanitarian situation in Palestine and the Middle East. Examples of Greek/Palestinian demonstrations are shown below. They were organised in coordination with a rally to advocate opposition to the war in Iraq, and to globalisation. In Figure 11, Arabs, Greeks and Palestinians are marching along Leoforos Kifissias, a major avenue in Athens that goes past the American and Israeli embassies. The black and white signs in Greek read 'Freedom to Palestine' and have 'Genoa 2001' written on top. The red, white and black signs are those of the 'Stop the war' coalition.



**Figure 11 – A Greek/Palestinian demonstration organised in remembrance of the murder of Ahmed Yasin (22nd March 2003)**



(Source: [www.sek-ist.gr/photos/yasin/1.htm](http://www.sek-ist.gr/photos/yasin/1.htm))

**Figure 12 – A Stop the War demonstration (20th March 2003)**



(Source: [www.sek-ist.gr/photos/20m/marti1.htm](http://www.sek-ist.gr/photos/20m/marti1.htm))

Even though Figure 12 is a photo of a demonstration specifically aimed at portraying opposition to the war in Iraq, the presence of Palestinians is evident, as, for example, they display Palestinian flags and wear their kuffiyas. Here, they



are walking down Vasilisis Sofias, another major thoroughfare, which leads off the square of Syntagma in the centre of Athens. The networks between specific Greek left wing and communist non-governmental groups and the Palestinians in Athens appear to be well established. At the same time, demonstrations may also constitute spaces that some Palestinians feel excluded from because of static portrayals of very specific and narrowly defined versions and images (in the form of posters, chants, clothing and so on) of what it means to be Palestinian. In this sense, diversity is occluded by the perceived need for a strategic political position.

As gendered spaces too, one must not forget how men and women may perceive them differently, but also how women and men may be negotiating the relationships amongst themselves within them. Abir, (38, Arabic teacher) for example, feels it is important to arrange demonstrations that highlight women's needs in the Arabic world in particular as well as the Palestinian cause in general. To this end, she has become involved in demonstrations that do this together with other women in Greece (Palestinian and non-Palestinian) that are different to those described above as they focus specifically on and are organised by women. In the process, they are carving out and claiming political and gendered spaces in which they are able to 'unite' as women and have their voices and needs heard as women, distinct from men.

Palestinian men do not seem to mind their wives get involved in the 'mixed' demonstrations described above. Palestinian women are often seen as symbolic of the 'mother' that is the Palestinian homeland (Lindholm Schulz 2003: 102) and the particular roles in advocacy and constructions of the Palestinian 'nation' and homeland are important. Yuval-Davis (1997) also highlights the importance of considering the role women play in constructions of nationalism and 'identity', which are crucial to advocacy. As Lindholm Schulz (2003: 136, 139) also notes: 'struggle' "is a gendered concept"...Palestinian women "reproduce the nation both biologically and culturally". For example, the idea of 'womenandchildren' (Enloe 1990, cited in Yuval-Davis 1997) implies that it is women who are constructed as attached to and embodying the homeland. Their presence at visible spaces of advocacy such as demonstrations may be seen as part of this. For example, at one demonstration attended by the



researcher, it was clear that a Palestinian woman wearing a headscarf was actively pushed (by the male Greek and Palestinian organisers of the demonstration) towards the front of the march. She joined two men and they proceeded to hold up the Palestinian flag all together in full and clear view of the Greek media. When Rafiq (40, restaurant worker), a participant present, was asked why this was done, he responded as follows:

*It's important to show our identity and that women are part of the cause too, not just men. It is our women who give birth to Palestinian children and bring them up; they are part of our struggle and I'm sure this lady feels happy to be there at the front.*

Liz: But her clothing represents Muslim Palestinian women only, surely?

Rafiq: *Yes, but there are more Muslim Palestinians than Christians here.*

Liz: And what do you mean by 'showing our identity'?

Rafiq: *That our religion and identity is important to us, that it is very important to our cause.*

Such comments may reflect the view that political 'unity' is seen as encompassing religious differences. They also suggest that women carry the 'burden of representation' and are "constructed as symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honour, both personally and collectively", an identity that may be constructed as essentialised and static (Yuval-Davis 2001: 127, citing Mercer 1990). As a result, women may become passive objects rather than subjects of dynamic change in such diasporic spaces.

It is difficult, however, to determine the extent to which Palestinian women feel empowered by such participation. Sana (34, housewife), for example, feels she is more politicised than her husband is, because she feels that, unlike her husband, she was brought up to be. As a result, she has encouraged her husband to go to demonstrations with her and become more aware of the



importance of advocacy of the Palestinian cause. Most women appear happy to attend but (like men too) this may have more to do with duty (or what their husbands expect them to do) and the need to support the cause rather than encourage genuine feelings of empowerment and the ability to effect deep and meaningful change. At the same time, their domestic role also prevents many from attending as much as they would like to, hence the likelihood that it is men rather than women, who are more likely to attend. One could argue, perhaps, that this domestic role women are expected to (or want to) take on is both demanding and very time consuming and that the resulting lack of time is a potential hindrance to political action in such spaces. They may still, however, feel politicised and be politically active in other diasporic spaces, such as their house.<sup>2</sup> Mothers and wives who feel they are politically active and who try to get involved in advocacy may find the pressures and stress of doing so much greater than for men, who may be more expected to be active politically and publicly and who are often less involved in the day-to-day practicalities of child-raising and domestic duties. This does not mean, however, that men do not take an active interest in their children's upbringing, as the family as a unit is seen as very important to Palestinians, both in Athens and elsewhere.

Palestinians (both men and women) who get involved in demonstrations describe feelings of pride at being Palestinian, their happiness at holding up their flag and banners and their ability to shout for justice (and have an informal political voice) when they go. They also, however, appear to be spaces, superficially at least in which Palestinian and Greek women, men and even children can stand and walk together recreating images of 'unity' and 'solidarity' and are appearing and feeling that they are showing their support for the Palestinian cause and their anger at injustices against them. At the same time, however, they are not necessarily always seen as political spaces or activities. For instance, although Samira (38, housewife/artist) claims she is not political, she emphasizes that she and her husband Mourid (earlier, in the same interview), "of course we always go to demonstrations". Such a division between what is deemed political (and linked to the formal sphere) and actions that advocate the

---

<sup>2</sup> The house as a diasporic space, in which women (and men) may be politicised and engage in processes of resistance and advocacy is discussed later on in this chapter.



cause (in informal spaces) seems representative of many Palestinians in Athens. As a result, they tend not to see the processes of advocacy they are involved in as political activism. The resistance or 'struggle' they may talk about being involved in is, therefore, rarely talked about in political terms but described as 'helping'. This can result in them feeling apathetic or disillusioned about what they are actually doing or feel able to do, despite their politicisation and advocacy.

### **The Parikia**

The Parikia (Jalia in Arabic) or community house is a diasporic space that is contested and gendered. It also constitutes a political space where Palestinians in Athens are negotiating and articulating their individual and collective identities and where they may feel hopeful, despairing, 'united' and fragmented in the process. Figure 13 depicts photos of the Parikia, which occupies a detached and unassuming house in the quiet middle-class Athenian suburb of Papagou.

**Figure 13 - Photos of the Parikia**



(Source: taken by the researcher, October 2003)



It is a space that was conceived as being Palestinian, as well as Arabic. It allows Palestinians to socialise and interact with other Palestinians within a Palestinian (and Arabic) environment. It can be seen as integral to advocacy of the Palestinian cause in its role as a political space in which to make Palestinians feel politicised, construct notions of 'shared consciousness', bring Palestinians in Athens together and solidify their cultural and symbolic connections to their homeland. Material political activities that take place within the Parikia and as a result of the Parikia encourage symbolic and material connections to Palestine and influence perceptions of what it means to be Palestinian, socially, culturally and politically.

The Parikia occupies a fairly old house and does not appear to be particularly well cared for, although a caretaker is chosen every year who is responsible for taking care of such things as bills, maintenance and so forth. The caretakers (who have been both men and women) also appear to be in control of what activities are allowed to take place there. They also play a role in organising and publicising activities and events associated with the Parikia, such as demonstrations, cultural and charity events. Meetings take place every Saturday afternoon and evening. They appear to be open events; people (Palestinians and non-Palestinians) can just walk in and out. The number of people who turn up each week fluctuates dramatically and during summer, the house is closed and meetings do not occur. Formal events are also organised there, such as barbecues, speeches and charity events.

Inside, it consists of three main rooms, a hall, a bathroom and a kitchen with steps leading down onto a patio area for sitting. There is also access to this area from the front gate; people do not have to go through the house to get to it. There is also room on the first floor, which is used for both lessons (Arabic lessons to Greek women married to Palestinians). Inside, there are photos of Yasser Arafat on the wall as well as embroideries of historical Palestine. There is a board with details of events and a small library of books, many of which appear to have been donated. Most weeks, a Jordanian chef provides traditional Arabic food at a low price. Children often run around playing before and after Arabic lessons that are provided for them.



The Parikia can be seen as a unique product of Palestinian exile in Greece, created by members of a diaspora who wish to remain connected to Palestine, and help encourage Palestinian ‘unity’ and advocacy of the Palestinian cause through the specific and strategic use of space. Yet, interestingly, the Greek name for it, the ‘Parikia’, translates into English as ‘foreign quarter’. Thus, as well as being a space that is re-connecting Palestinians in Athens to their homeland, it may also be seen as a hybrid space, in which Greece and Palestine may come together, through cross-border networks and connections, a space in which Palestinians in Greece are able to make sense of ‘being Palestinian’ whilst living in Greece. Its hybridity can be seen, for example, in the registration form for membership, in which information is given in both Greek and Arabic and its stamp (see Figure 14)

**Figure 14 – Stamp of Parikia**



(Source: Thessaloniki GUPS produced book titled ‘Palestinian poetry’)

On the one hand, this stamp portrays the image of Jerusalem that many Palestinians in Greece wish to see as their future capital, which symbolises a politicised connection to Palestine and forms a very important aspect of the Palestinian cause. On the other hand, the writing on it is both Greek and Arabic, representative perhaps, of its position ‘in-between’ Greece and Palestine. It also points out that officially at least, the Parikia is a company: the banner in Greek translates as ‘The Palestinian Parikia Company, Greece’. Its status as an economic venture must mean that it is run as a business, not as a charity or organisation. Although this does not change the fact that it is a political,



diasporic space, it highlights the importance and role of money in the material creation and maintenance of diasporic spaces and the political activities, such as advocacy of the Palestinian cause that occur within them. This may also explain its supposed connections with and representation of more wealthy Palestinians as is claimed by a number of participants, which is outlined below. The existence of such diasporic spaces does not automatically ensure that Palestinians feel resistant within them or as a result of their engagement with them because of the power relations, inequalities and constructions of difference and representation that occur. As Featherstone (2003: 408) stresses: “attention needs to be directed to the [multiple] ways in which political activity both negotiates and creates cross-cutting relations of power”. This may explain why there appears to a strong divide amongst Palestinians who go to the Parikia and like it and those who do not go and do not like it.

#### The Parikia as a political space?

The following discussion illustrates what the Parikia means to one Palestinian, culturally, socially and politically. Bilal (33, FCE), who regularly attends meetings feels:

*I can see a lot of Palestinians there. We can talk about our situation and we can also talk about how we can do something as a group. One person on his own cannot do anything; if we are a group then we can do something and I believe in the media a lot in order to publicise your case to the people and to let people know.*

Liz: So you think the Parikia is a good idea?

Bilal: *Yes, yes. I think it used to exist before but it was different then; now more people go and there are more young people there too as there's a lot of students coming to study and they have ideas to talk about and they want to do things so it's good.*

Liz: Do you think it's a political place then, as well as social and cultural place?



Bilal: *When you sit with people, you will understand something about Palestine when you're there, about, for example, when people went there, their experiences and I like to go and listen and learn things about Palestine.*

Bilal reveals the ways in which Palestinians may be politically active in the Parikia, through their social interactions. The fact that he feels he can “learn things about Palestine there” also highlights the importance of it as a space that is actively used to connect Palestinians to Palestine, through the bringing of politicians from Palestine as well as speeches by Palestinians who have been there recently. Therefore, he suggests that learning about Palestine is a political act in itself. Those who attend, such as Bilal, appear to do so without any clear perception or admission that they are being political in the process because their activities may appear more social. Yet his ambivalence over the question of whether he sees it as a political space appears to illustrate how merged the political, social and cultural are within Palestinian lives, feelings and actions. As a result, it may be difficult for them to distinguish between them. For example, men appear more likely to discuss the symbolic and political significance of the villages they originated from and the homeland, Greek politics, cultural and political events that have taken place or will take in Greece, Palestine and worldwide and so forth.

Women, who often sit separately from men, may also discuss such issues but they seem more likely to talk about domestic matters, although many are also politicised and interested in politics. They too may participate in more organised political discussions. For example, during a visit to the Parikia by the researcher, one woman who had recently visited her family in the West Bank describes her social, cultural and political experiences of her trip. Both men and women then ask her questions about her visit. In particular, she is asked her political opinions of the situation there and her feelings of living in Greece away from her family. Her responses are both optimistic and pessimistic, culminating in her expression of deep-seated feelings of guilt with her safe and relatively secure life in Athens.

Palestinian men and women are negotiating what it means to be Palestinian in Greece as well as issues of ‘identity’, citizenship, statehood and representation in the Parikia. They debate injustices, their human and political



rights, demands, their needs as Palestinians and people of the world. As such discussions are dynamic, they do not always talk about these things, but Palestine and the Palestinian cause always appear to be present, are latent, always in the background, informing their judgements, discussions and arguments. They are also reminded of their connections (and commitment?) to Palestine by the physical space and its banal (and symbolic) objects such as photos of Arafat on the wall, food that is eaten 'there' served in the kitchen 'here', talking to other Palestinians they would not normally meet. It is also a space that Unions have used (the new Workers' Union have had meetings there and the GUPS have their base there).

Palestinians, such as Bilal above, who attend the Parikia see such activities and relations as very important ways to resist and connect them as Palestinians and their lives in Greece to Palestine. As Featherstone (2003: 408) points out: "resistances are the products of multiple relations". Their actions within the Parikia and its material environment could also be seen as encouraging stereotypical or particular visions of what it means to be Palestinian. For example, men and women sitting separately is representative more, perhaps of Muslim Palestinians than Christian Palestinians, who may as a result, feel uncomfortable. This also illustrates how such spaces come to be seen as inclusive, exclusive, or misrepresentative by Palestinians. At the same time, their weekly consuming of 'Palestinian-ness' at the Parikia is always tempered and situated within their own daily realities of life in Greece. As some Palestinians interviewed also point out, the Parikia is also where they can discuss their different views; they are not necessarily conforming to a homogenised Palestinian 'identity'. As such, it is a space in which knowledges and constructions of Palestine are being formed and negotiated dynamically through the filter of being in Greece.

The potential for the Parikia to be seen as representative of certain 'types' of Palestinians can be seen by Abir's (38, Arabic teacher) description:

*I go there if there is a meeting or a speech or there are events. It's a place to socialise, like a café. The men sit there playing cards, the women talk. There are Arabic lessons for children. These are children who are half Greek, half*



*Palestinian and they have another mentality. The Palestinians who go there speak Greek to their children you see.*

Abir inadvertently highlights the hybridity of the space, with its “half Greek, half Palestinian” children. At the same time, as an Arabic teacher, she approves of the Arabic lessons for children and there is a very slight hint of disapproval at parents who do speak Greek to their children. This may be because she feels it is important for Palestinian children to speak and remember Arabic whilst living in Greece, in order to ensure that this aspect of their ‘identity’ is learnt. Arabic is often seen as playing a major role in ‘uniting’ Palestinians in Greece, hence the political and strategic teaching of Arabic lessons at the Parikia. Abir’s statement also highlights the perception some Palestinians have in Athens that it is more a space for Palestinian married to Greeks and who are more hybrid and somehow less ‘pure’ and who need to be encouraged to become and practice their ‘Palestinian identity’ more. Like Abir, Nisreen (23, student, leader of GUPS) describes the Parikia in more cultural and social terms, as a space for families, nostalgic stories, gossip but she also hints at how such a space is perceived differently by men and women, highlighting its gendered nature:

*The Parikia is something different, a Palestinian who is married to a Greek woman, or a Palestinian woman married to a Greek guy, so they go just to remember the old stuff, oh when I was a student, when I was younger, and they take their wife to see another wife, it’s like that...there are more families there, people who are working.*

Nisreen also sees it as a hybrid space in which Palestinians married to Greeks and their children are more likely to go. More importantly perhaps, both women do not see it as a space for political action or resistance. As a result, Abir, who is politically active, does not go. Nisreen, however, as President of the GUPS has organised Union meetings there, which although are proactive and very much politically infused, she appears to see as separate from what she perceives as the cultural and social space of the Parikia. What is interesting about these Student Union meetings is the continuous mixing of Greek and Arabic; the same applies



to all meetings that take place there. Although Arabic prevails, there are sprinklings of Greek words tossed into the conversation at regular intervals. This is not surprising given the fact that Palestinians who go there may have lived over 20 years in Greece, that their wives may be Greek and have children of mixed origin.

There are other Palestinians in Athens who also perceive it as just a cultural and social space, but for whom this is problematic, as they would rather it be more politically active. Rania, (38, FCE) for example, feels that:

*there, it's just gossip, I don't like it. It's just sitting there, gossiping. No actions are done, nothing is taken into consideration, there are only words. We have to be active, they, there have to be more active, have more contact with people, organise fundraising, bazaars, events should take place every week.*

Rania's views suggest that the Parikia as simply a space as it is currently, despite its appearance as a political space suggested above, is not enough given the current state of affairs in Palestine. As a result, she does not go but is politically active in other ways, highlighting it as a space that is exclusive to those who see it as lacking in its political role. Layla (38, FCE) also describes her own similar feelings on it:

*Well, let me tell you something, these people go there just to meet socially, they celebrate things sometimes for Palestine, or they have people from Palestine talking. Why haven't I been there?*

Liz: Yes, I was going to ask you that!

Layla: *Why? (laughs) The thing is, I'm really very busy, so I can't just go any time they say they are having something, but I would have gone and I would find the time to go if I thought that what they were doing was really useful. It's just only talking and talking and talking, just words.*



Liz: What would you like to see happen here?

Layla: *Things should be more organised and what they are doing should be directed to the Europeans. We have to tell the Europeans, come here and look and listen, to see the truth because Israelis they are really better than us in this; they do it better all the time. They go to each person and say see this is what we want and this is what is happening. What about us? We are owners of the right, we are stronger than them because we have the right, so why don't have that? But we Arabs are so lazy. Also, we are not supported by the Arabs. Unfortunately, not the government or the people are supporting us – it's just words. They say we love Palestine and the Palestinians and we do whatever they want but nothing happens. And it's not only that – me I can't go to Egypt, to Saudi Arabia, I can't go to Tunis, I can't go anywhere in the Arab world. It's much easier to get a visa to go to the United States than to an Arab country. Just words blah blah blah. We have to have good media, a schedule, a plan, to tell the Greeks the truth, what's really going on. Maybe after that, we might get a good support from Greece. If I want to know what's happening in Palestine, I have hundreds of channels to tell me, so I don't have to wait until someone from Palestine to come and tell me – they need to do things to help the Palestinians, at least the ones who are here. I need something stronger to be done, to help me practically. Something to change my life. I think this is my duty, something I can do to help Palestinians.*

Liz: And you don't feel that Palestinians do this enough?

Layla: *Our problems, I think are heavier than our weight, it's too much. Some people, I don't want to find excuses for them but all of us have our own problems and our problems are really so hard and so tough, so they just think about their own life, their own problems.*

For Layla, the Parikia as a space where political action and political participation may take place is inadequate and she would like to see it become more radicalised. At the same time, although she acknowledges the difficulties of



doing this, she is adamant that more must be done to practically help Palestinians, such as herself. This is interesting, as she is not only talking about the advocacy of the Palestinian cause to help fellow Palestinian 'there' in more abstract terms, which is what the majority of Palestinians in Athens do. Here, as in so many Palestinian discussions on what they understand by the notion of 'political', everyday, informal and disorganised acts of talking, dealing with problems, and generally living their lives as Palestinians in Greece are not overtly seen as political or resistant. It is such perceptions of everyday actions as non-political that may trigger feelings of apathy and disillusionment and that merely advocating the cause in such ways amounts to nothing. Layla's perception that not enough is being done in an organised fashion to help Palestinians echo those of many participants. Layla also hints at an important perceived obstacle to inclusion and involvement in such spaces: lack of time. This is a very important note and is one that affects perceptions and realities of political advocacy and resistance. As Lina (38, businesswoman) argues:

*They do activities and sometimes at Christmas, they do charity things, they do a party and they collect the money to send down there to different charities, to a camp or to a hospital. People here try but the thing is, what I told you before, a big percentage of Palestinians and, their first worry is to work and support their family, which is maybe why not everyone can participate.*

Jamal (34, FCE) also points out what he feels the Parikia is lacking in:

*It's a good start because people are gathering but you have to do more and you need a structure. What they are doing there is more simple, not strong, superficial, more social. We have to make people understand our case more, to be able to argue our case, using the media, fundraising. We need something more long-term.*

Jamal, like Layla above is disillusioned by the Parikia's lack of political organisation and energy. As Palestinians who are politically active in other diasporic spaces and ways, they are viewing the Parikia from a particular angle.



For them, resistance and advocacy needs more commitment than those involved in the Parikia appear to have, yet they do not appear to be willing to help make those changes within the Parikia.

Other Palestinians, such as Karim (24, student) go because they feel they have to: “you meet other Palestinians there, you talk, so it’s good but I don’t really have time to go often. I am doing other things. But I do feel that it is my duty to go there sometimes”. Perhaps the Parikia is not so much a space that students such as Karim feel able to go to and feel included or comfortable in, but that they feel obliged to frequent. This may also be true of others who go there to. By going there, they are showing their commitment to the Palestinian cause and how they perceive Palestinians should be and act; they can be ‘true’ Palestinians, even if it is just for an afternoon. For Karim, being Palestinian may be tied to attendance at the Parikia; the Parikia, as a space acts an important link to Palestine and may form a major role in his feelings of being and acting as Palestinian. This in turn, may have triggered his involvement in activism, which has ranged from going to demonstrations to telling Greeks the ‘truth’ about Palestine and the Palestinians, acts of resistance and advocacy which, before, coming to Greece he did not do. Thus the significance in the Parikia can be seen as political space which may encourage constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’ to be negotiated as politicised and which may result in political activities. Tamara, (32, researcher) therefore, appears to be right in believing that the Parikia is especially important for students, who do not have their families with them, so that they may feel closer to the home they have left behind (bearing in mind, that for most, this will not be the West Bank, or Gaza<sup>3</sup>):

*It could be a better place. There is diversity there in terms of people who go but they don’t have the capacity or the energy to do much. For the students, it’s an important place though where they can go being away from home.*

---

<sup>3</sup> According to Haleef, an embassy official, most students in Athens are not from the West Bank or Gaza, but from wealthier families spread throughout the rest of Middle East. This is because being a student in Greece is often an expensive process, (despite the fact that they get their tuition paid for) due to living costs.



The potential for students to be politically influenced by places such as the Parikia appears to be high. However, Tamara's reference to 'home' is misleading; she may mean, on the one hand, simply that they are able to meet other Palestinians and speak Arabic at the Parikia, which may remind them of their families. On the other hand, she may be referring to the Parikia as a space that is able to reconnect them to their homeland and in the process, potentially make them more politicised and politically active as they 'rediscover' their roots. Tamara also points to the diversity she feels is present there, which she appears to see as a good thing, as for her, it seems to be an open, inclusive space. There are other Palestinians who do not seem so positive about this diversity and feel that it is misrepresentative of 'proper' Palestinians, and that too many Palestinians who are more 'integrated' into Greek society go there.

Representation is an issue that Palestinians in Athens feel strongly about. In the case of the Parikia and other diasporic spaces, its importance is highlighted by feelings of inclusion and exclusion that occur within and as a result of such spaces. These feelings are often the result of perceptions of whether they are being fairly or inadequately represented by such spaces and the people within them. Unsurprisingly, there are those who feel that the Parikia does not represent them and as a result they may feel excluded from attending, or if they do, they may feel uncomfortable or restricted in terms of discussions and potential actions. As Ibrahim (32, construction worker) explains:

*We do go, but I personally don't like it very much.*

Liz: Why not?

Ibrahim: *Because those who have set it up don't represent those Palestinians who are living this nightmare, who are resisting. They only set it up just for the image, just for people to see them doing something but they don't have anything to do with those who are involved in the struggle, so they are not really involved in or doing anything about it to help, in my opinion. And the leader, the chairman is a very rich Palestinian, okay he does care I suppose. Okay, I've been there a few times. I like being with the Palestinians but we are still at the*



*beginning here and it's still new so they don't do so much and there isn't much there; they don't do many things.*

Liz: Do you think that the majority of people who go there are wealthy?

Ibrahim: *There are some poorer people who go but the people in the other category who have more money do whatever they want anyway so it doesn't make any difference if poorer people go. It represents certain people, a certain category of people, not everyone. It represents their social circles. It's for show, so that people can go and show off that they have it all. But that's just how it always is. It's always the rich who have the upper hand on everything.*

Liz: They do what they want?

Ibrahim: *Yes, they do whatever they want.*

Liz: Are there not other places that Palestinians go to?

Ibrahim: *That's the only place and as I told you it's new.*

Ibrahim suggests that money has a role to play in who goes there; consequently, it may be seen as elitist although his negative perceptions of it have not prevented him from going which he appears to do for his family's sake. His remarks also highlight what he feels is a lack of visible and representative space Palestinians can be involved in politically; yet it may be that those who do not find the current spaces inclusive decide to create their own alternatives. For him, this involves informal networks and connections with Palestinian families he feels he can relate to, which for him and other Palestinians are just as important as the Parikia. Ironically, therefore, despite the attempts to create the Parikia as a space in which to potentially unite Palestinians, it may actually also be fragmenting them. At the same time, though, this is not necessarily having an adverse affect on potential political activism, as those not involved in it are still politicised and may feel more able to pursue activities or constructions of 'shared



consciousness' that they feel are beneficial to Palestinians in Greece and beyond. For Ibrahim, for example, being Palestinian in Greece is intimately linked to Islam and living as a Muslim forms a very large aspect in his family's life. This is something he advocates to other Palestinians and Greeks he meets; he is, therefore, constructing and perpetuating his particular notions of what it means to be Palestinian. In the process, his concerns and political activities may be different to those Palestinians who are committed to the Parikia. For him, for example, the building of Mosques in Athens is of paramount importance and a priority in terms of Palestinian rights and needs in Athens. Likewise, in his discussions of the Palestinian cause, he may be more likely to highlight the religious aspects of what it means to be Palestinian. Although this is arguably leading to more diverse representation of what it means to be and feel Palestinian in Athens, it is also serving to create tensions amongst Palestinians, particularly those who are Christian, or who may not feel that religion forms a major aspect of being Palestinian (discussed in more detail in Chapter Five).

Other Palestinians in Athens are even more negative about the Parikia as a representative space. Fadila (30, housewife) also illustrates how easily people are put off from attending and being involved in such spaces. One negative impression seems enough to deter some from further attendance:

Fadila: *There is no organisation here that gathers Palestinians.*

Liz: What about the Parikia in Papagou? The Community House?

Fadila: *Well, it's a social thing isn't it? But you know, there is no democracy there. We got an invitation several years ago saying come and vote for the leader of the community but it was ridiculous; there was only one candidate and we were supposed to vote for him, so we didn't go.*

This quote pinpoints how crucial the issue of representation is for many Palestinians as individuals and as a group. The testimonies provided above appear to show that diasporic spaces such the Parikia, although theoretically an open and inclusive space, are at the same time, contested as well as closed and



exclusive. What is potentially problematic though is that the fact that some Palestinians feel excluded does not appear to bother those who do go a great deal. Thus, a self-perpetuating cycle of exclusion and possibly fragmentation may be occurring. It seems that because those who disapprove or who see it as useless do not go, their voices and perceptions are not heard by those who do and nothing is done to change the status quo. It seems that in the process of stressing and reconstructing the 'unity' of Palestinians in Athens, leaders and members of the Palestinian diaspora have ignored and suppressed vital differences. Constructions of Palestinian 'unity' in Greece tend to ignore the disunities and tensions that arise as a result of differences. Yet, these very disunities highlight the diverse nature of Palestinian lives and identities in Athens. This diversity and difference may be something Palestinians should expect, welcome and work with to promote tolerance and understanding within the diaspora in Greece. The Parikia, in particular, despite being an informal diasporic space, is one that is visible and supposedly open to all Palestinians in Athens. It, therefore, has the potential to fulfil such a role. It may constitute a site for 'action' and 'engagement' (see Cornwall 2002, quoted in McEwan 2005: 5) needed to encourage feelings of empowerment and lessen feelings of apathy and despair.

### **The Unions**

The GUPW, GUPS and their associated activities and events also constitute diasporic political spaces. They constitute spaces similar to the Parikia, although they are perhaps more exclusionary in the sense that they are limited in terms of who can become a member. Despite this, they must be considered, as they form well-known diasporic spaces in Athens and for those involved in them they are potentially very politically active. The GUPS, for example, played an instrumental role in abolishing tuition fees for Palestinian students in 1976. Haleef's memories (Appendix Nine) highlight the positive relationships between Greeks and Palestinians at the time, which are still evident in diasporic spaces. He describes the response of the Minister the students went to in order to ask for the removal of fees:



*He told us: I, when I see Arabs, Palestinians speaking the Greek language, as you do, when they are studying and under the difficulties they are experiencing and the stress they have to go through and they the fact that they have learnt Greek – it is my debt to help you. I am obligated to; I'm not doing you a favour.*

Haleef goes on to describe the importance of the Unions:

*The Unions, be it the students or the doctors are very important. First of all they ease relations. Instead of me having to deal with all the students one by one, I have contact with the Students' Committee. They communicate to me all the problems they have. We gather them or many times it is their decision to gather and the Ambassador or I go and give them a political update and report. I can't call all the students one by one. The Union collects them when there is going to be a meeting. They all gather in a room and we inform them of events and so on; we have contact in this way. They take over our political role in their own space that they live in their universities, on their boards. They have boards in their departments where they put up our announcements, where meetings or demonstrations are going to be held. Their role, without exaggeration, is very important. We see their role as even more important than our role in reality and in terms of political activities and actions. This is because they are in the community. Don't look at me who's been here for so long and who has relations and so on. There could be colleagues of mine who have come from another country who may not even know Greek – how is he to know what is happening in Greek society. The Unions, the doctors, the students, they are the ones who tell the embassy what is happening in the community. The representatives deliver the political messages to the Greek government. And we've never had any problems in their attitude as Unions or in terms of the jobs they do or with the Greek authorities. They are correct in their attitudes.*

As an official at the embassy now, Haleef feels that an important role that Unions have to play is promoting 'unity' and harmony amongst Palestinians and good relations with Greeks. He also clearly highlights what he feels is the political role Unions have to play, ideologically and practically, in terms of



understanding the political mood of the ‘community’ and relating its needs to the embassy and Greek government. Sa’id (25, student) is also very positive about the political, social and cultural spaces Unions constitute that he feels can be helpful and potentially empowering for those involved:

*Now, the basic element of the Union is elections, which you get elected, you’re going to try and provide for your country and for the students of your country what has been provided for you...we try to bring out the Palestinian culture to Greece, through Palestinian dances, through pictures, movies, a couple of festivals, so we show the Greeks how they live and everything. The third thing is, we as students here have to keep our students together, united. Sometimes we have a party, sometimes a barbecue, sometimes we have a trip to get close to each other because all of us we’re foreigners here. We are Palestinians and we are all foreigners.*

Liz: Do students feel empowered then as a result?

Sa’id: *Yes, more so, I would say...*

Liz: As someone who is involved in the Union, do you feel that you are doing something to help the situation there?

Sa’id: *Yes. We all have a small role to play. As small as it can be, I don’t know how much I can offer. If I work in a diplomatic area, I can offer more, but me helping the students here who come from there, I feel that when he goes back or calls his family, like this kid yesterday when he called his mum, he said mum, don’t worry, I’m with my own family now, with another family now; they take care of me, everything.*

Liz: Do you think that Palestinians generally feel the same way as you, that they are doing something to help?

Sa’id: *Yes.*



Liz: Are there opportunities here for Palestinians to help?

Sa'id: *They're trying to help as much as they can. If a person has a problem, if one Palestinian knows that there is another Palestinian who has a problem, then he will help him out, just because he's Palestinian and we are supposed to help each other. We have to help each other because we are all outside of our country, so if we don't stick together and we don't help each other, no-one's going to help us.*

Sa'id's discussion illustrates the complex political, social and cultural nature of diasporic spaces and the ways in which such spaces may serve to connect Palestinians within Athens. His comment of "we are Palestinians and we are all foreigners" points to his need to create spaces in which to help curb feelings of insecurity and alienation being a foreigner may invoke. Yet, at the same time, as someone who is deeply involved in the GUPS, he is also hopeful and aware that such a 'coming together' and helping can have political implications in terms of Palestinian students' propensity to help and act.

The following quote by Mahmud (24, student) illustrates how both Unions' political activities based around advocating the Palestinian cause may be dependent on the interrelationships between Palestinians and Greeks within diasporic spaces:

Liz: Are there many opportunities here for fundraising to raise money for Palestine within the Unions?

Mahmud: *There is and we did it. You had from the Greek Workers Association, they were giving away coupons with one euro and they save up the money and they send it to Palestine. That happened last winter. That was the last big campaign, but in small organisations and NGOs it happens a lot. It happens from lay, everyday people just raising money, collecting food, sugar, milk. There's really a lot of support from the Greeks.*



The importance of having material and inclusive spaces as locations where Palestinians feel they can gather, give each other advice and support as well as articulate what their rights and benefits should be, is illustrated by Issam (53, Leader of 'old' GUPW):

*At this moment, we are having difficulties in establishing a place, like a club let's say. Usually, they have the Parikia, the community house and it isn't enough. Now we are getting a place for the Union; we will start some activities there. The Community they just open their house one day a week, we are going to have ours open all week, some hours in the evening so that they can come, look for jobs, make connections. We are trying to do something different. And we hope that we are going to succeed.*

Issam continues by outlining the importance of the relationship between reconstructions of 'unity' and political action within such spaces:

*Now on the conditions of the workers here in Greece, we work here with pride, even if we are a small community. But we are active, we have a Students' Union, we have a Doctors' Union, we have the Parikia, we have the Workers' Union and soon we will have an Engineers' Union, so we are trying to unite ourselves with Unions and things like that.*

These words are echoed in a speech Issam gives at the launch of the manifesto of a newly formed far-left Greek political party. He claims to speak on behalf of Palestinians in Greece and is well-received by the audience with whose party he appears to be trying to align himself. Thus, symbiotic relationships of mutual benefit seem to exist between Greek and Palestinian organisations. It appears to be the norm for leftist groups in Greece to advocate Palestinian issues and this could also be seen as an attempt to gain popular support. For Palestinians, the relationship is positive as they gain allies in the advocacy of their cause. Yet, problems can arise when speakers such as Issam claim to represent and speak for Palestinians in Greece. As outlined in Chapter Five, there are certain Palestinians who see the Union created by Issam as illegal and as they watched him on the



stage, they became frustrated by his claims. The Greek organisers of the rally seemed oblivious to this conflict and were, therefore, happy to let Issam speak on behalf of all Palestinians in Greece. However, this also illustrates the relative success that Palestinians have had in portraying a united front in Greece; the Greek organisations with whom Palestinians are involved do not seem aware of the tensions that do exist within the diaspora in Athens. It seems that such rifts are dealt with internally as far as possible.

There are Palestinians in Athens such as Layla (38, FCE) are not so positive about the present role and actions of the Unions; as a former member of the GUPS, she feels it is not as active as it used to be. As mentioned above, this also highlights the fact that activism for Palestinians in Athens is indeed dynamic and changes in intensity and nature over time depending on factors such as the general political situation and climate, events in the Middle East and individual propensity to act and be involved. Layla certainly believes that the GUPS was more active in the past, when she was part of it:

*I used to be a member of the Students' Union – that was great because we used to do many good things. They are active, so when I was a student, it was so active you can't imagine. I used to bring my teachers from the American University, they were American, to listen to us. One teacher, she saw us dance our dances and listened to us and I asked her what she thought and she said, I'm so proud of you. It was really great, but unfortunately these days they're not.*

Liz: You don't think they're so active?

Layla: *Not like us. It was when the Palestinian camps in Beirut were surrounded by the Lebanese and many of the Palestinians were dying of hunger, it was horrible, so we did a hunger strike for 48 hours then – now it's not the same. They are trying to do some things and I hope they will succeed, why not.*

At the same time, and despite her initial pessimism, a glimmer of hope does appear, which is typical of the constant tension between hope and disillusionment that Palestinians in Athens experience. Nisreen, the President of



GUPS is aware, however, of certain obstacles to joining the Union. In response to a question on whether the majority of students in Athens are members of the GUPS, she says:

*Mmm, yes, or maybe they come, but they don't come another day, or they are afraid to be in the Palestinian Union. They think it's something like a political organisation and they don't want to keep in touch, they say because they go to demonstrations and so on, and maybe outside the Israeli embassy, they take a picture of them and send it down to his country and then he can't pass through Palestine, so they get afraid of that and they don't want to...okay they will come to festivals and things like that but they don't go to the demonstrations. They say it's nice, good, but I can't do it, I won't be involved.*

In response to a question on whether he feels he is helping, Karim (24, student) also describes how he feels surveillance is an obstacle to advocacy in Athens:

*Yes. Whatever I do for them it's nothing – they are giving a lot, their life, their freedom, their everything and really you wish you could do something to help them but what can you do unless you have stronger organisations and they are united and really things are difficult. Now, its easy to say something that is not considered right and they can catch you – there are many organisations helping Palestinians in Palestine that have been closed because of this. So even if you have an organisation that is trying to give money or help they will find you and say that you are doing something wrong, so we are losing hope sometimes, but we have to have hope because if we don't we will lose the battle but we are human beings, we have feelings.*

Despite the fact that on the whole, Palestinians in Athens do feel safe and secure, some are always suspicious and scared of getting involved in anything that will jeopardise their potential mobility. This surveillance they feel they are under is intimately linked to their lack of formal citizenship and the fact that they feel that, as Palestinians, they are subject to intense scrutiny especially by Israel, which controls their movements in and out of the West Bank and Gaza. At the



same time and somewhat ironically, those without a Palestinian ‘identity card’ and with other citizenship statuses such as Jordanian may feel freer to get involved in advocacy and activism, because they are not subject to as much scrutiny by Israel. A situation exists, therefore, that those who may wish to get involved the most in homeland politics and activism are the very ones who are most wary of doing so (and are the ones who are least likely to be allowed into the Occupied Territories). The issues of fear and anxiety as a result of control, surveillance and discrimination are ones that cannot be ignored as they have large impacts on present and future political participation. These issues also highlight the particular difficulties associated with diasporic spaces that are more overtly political. The overwhelming perceptions by Palestinians in Athens that their actions do not constitute political activism may also, therefore, be linked to their fears (and realities) of surveillance and discrimination. They may not want to be seen as politically active as this may have negative repercussions for them if they wish to return or visit Palestine/Israel. Thus, spaces such as the Parikia that may appear less political may be more effective at allowing Palestinians to be and feel politically active.

### **The embassy**

The embassy can be seen as a semi-official diasporic political space with distinct and continuous relations with the Greek government and political organisations in Palestine and claims to represent Palestinians in Greece.<sup>4</sup> The embassy provides documentation and advice to Palestinians on residency and citizenship issues. It also co-ordinates official relations between Greeks and Palestinians and has an important role to play in advocating the Palestinian cause and constructions of ‘Palestinian-ness’ to the Greek public, government and media. During an interview with Haleef, an embassy official, for example, it became clear that he was well rehearsed in explaining and promoting the Palestinian cause and issues to the Greek media (using talk shows and the news, for

---

<sup>4</sup> This discussion of the embassy as a diasporic political space has to be read and understood in tandem with its role in helping to construct and encourage particular notions of ‘unity’ and Palestinian ‘identity’ and the tensions this has resulted in, outlined in Chapter Five. Here the focus is more on the material political activities in which the embassy is involved (as those within it and associated to it strive to advocate the Palestinian cause) but also on perceptions of the embassy as a political space, which is inclusive, exclusive and active.



instance) and the government (through close personal and official networks). Through its Greek and Palestinian networks, it is heavily involved in organising political activities that advocate and support the Palestinian cause such as demonstrations, charity events and bringing political commentators and politicians from Palestine and the Middle East to talk both at the embassy and at the Parikia.

It is a space, which occupies a detached house in a wealthy suburb of Athens, in which there are also many other embassies. It appears to be an area frequented more by men than women, although there are women working there in what seem to be secretarial and cleaning capacities. Nadia, (24, housewife) who has worked there, praises what she calls the “friendly and open atmosphere there” and claims to have “really enjoyed my time there” because of “the type of space it is. It is the best place to find out what is going on politically in Palestine. I found it very interesting and stimulating.” It seems relatively open to those Palestinians who want to visit it and there are Palestinians who are very supportive of it and its political actions and feel that it does what it can. For them it is a space, which actively enables them to discuss politics and help the embassy in its political role and activities. Bilal (33, FCE), Nadia’s husband, discusses his relationship with the embassy and its importance as a political space, in which advocacy may take place:

*I know about computers, so if they need anything I go every week and I help them and actually because I like to go there and I hear the latest news there about what’s going on in Palestine.*

Liz: Do you think that the embassy is doing a good job here?

*Bilal: Yes, I don’t know their budget but I believe that if they had more money that they could do more. It’s important to be in groups for business, to raise awareness, for everything and for Greeks and Palestinians to work together for Palestine and do whatever it takes and I think if will do something like this, they will be more active and the Palestinians here will do something for the Palestinians there. But it depends on their budget.*



Liz: So they do a lot of good things to help Palestinians both here and there?

Bilal: *Yes, yes – I should tell you that the Palestinian embassy here brings people here to study, people for medical reasons, who have been wounded and they have brought children from Palestine to go camping in Greece so that they can forget the situation there for a bit and to experience something different; they do this every year, which I think is very good. They also take Greeks from here to go to Palestine to visit and I think usually, Palestinians expect more from the embassy. But I look at the whole image, the big picture; you can't put a big rock on a tiny pebble. They do a good job with what they have.*

Bilal is supportive of the embassy and feels it is doing what it can politically given the resources it has. Those Palestinians in Athens who support the embassy and its representations and definitions of Palestinians seem to do so willingly. This is because of personal relationships and networks and similar political beliefs (in other words, they are pro-PLO or at least tolerate it although this is not necessarily the case as they may have contact with the embassy because they need it for various reasons). Mourid (38, FCE) also frequents the embassy, with which he is on good terms. For example, as a result of his attendance at an event<sup>5</sup> there in which a politician from the West Bank spoke, he felt both empowered and despairing. On the one hand, he was excited at being able to meet, listen and discuss the political situation in Palestine with this man. It made him feel “hopeful for things there, that there are people there trying to do things and that they are willing to listen to someone like me, who does not live there and has not visited it for twenty years. It was a great opportunity.” On the other hand, the event also made him think about the “amount of work that still needs to be done, which is depressing, both here, you know, with explaining the Palestinian cause to the Greeks and there”.

The embassy as a political space is contested. Palestine is not yet an officially recognised state. Palestinians living in Athens have not voted for its current leaders. It is, therefore, understandable that not all Palestinians may accept it as a legitimate political representative of Palestinian interests in Greece

---

<sup>5</sup> This appears to be an event in which a small number of Palestinians were formally invited to.



and Palestine. For example, the closed and restricted nature of the event Mourid went to, described above illustrates that the embassy can be inclusive and active politically for some and exclusive and politically inactive for others. Numerous respondents find the embassy problematic and inadequate as a political space and actor. Some Palestinians who do not feel they are supported by the embassy (or who have little or no contact with it) perceive that it excludes and does not help or represent. Masud (26, construction worker) describes a situation where he feels this happened:

*When the embassy said I was allowed to go back to Palestine – they sent me via Jordan – but when I got to the border, I was told that I could not enter. I had been lied to, but when I got back to Greece, the embassy said ‘we sent him to Palestine, but he came back’, like it was my fault...another time, I went to get a paper that I needed and they refused to give it to me. They said that it would create a lot of difficulties for them. I said okay, and I left but then I talked to a friend of mine who said that they give this paper all the time. So I got really angry and I went back and threatened them and in the end I got it. If Palestinians don’t help Palestinians who will? Why should I have to shout to get my rights, what I need from my own people? The people in the embassy are empty. They are not truly Palestinian, or with al-Fateh, or whatever. They just say whatever will benefit them the most. And people feel that they have to maintain good relations with it because it has power, because it gives out papers people need, but it doesn’t treat Palestinians equally. For example, if they find out you are from Gaza, they don’t care but if you are from the West Bank, they welcome you, all smiles, so they help those who they think have more money.*

Masud also maintains that the embassy is always short of money and resources and for this reason is more likely to align itself and support those who are wealthy, such as the Palestinian owners of businesses. This can have important implications for those without large sums of money. For example, Masud claims that in the past, the embassy was not willing to help him with a pay dispute with his Palestinian employer because the employer was wealthy and the embassy did not want to upset him or lose his support. Therefore, there does seem to be some



form of favouritism occurring although it is unlikely that the embassy would publicly acknowledge this.

The embassy is also far from trouble-free in terms of perceptions of representation and political action. Fadila (30, housewife) feels that:

*The embassy does what it can I suppose with the resources it has, but we were not impressed at all with the Ambassador. We were at this demonstration and he was addressing the crowd of mainly Greek people in English! How can you communicate Palestinian issues to the Greeks effectively if you don't even speak the language? This isn't right – and he only got the job because of his connections to the PLO and Arafat. He's been here about 10 years and he doesn't know Greek!*

As a result, there are those Palestinians who feel that it is not fulfilling its role in advocating the Palestinian cause and engaging in political activities adequately enough. Tariq (60, doctor), for example, cites lack of time as a reason for the embassy and those involved with it not being politically active as they should be:

*Now that we have the PLO office, I mean the embassy, what we need is to be more active, because it's not like in the past when we had more time, now the problem is that we don't have time and in order to have a Union and keep it going, it's time consuming.*

What is more interesting about his comments is that he clearly sees the embassy as a PLO space and that he conflates the embassy with the Unions, as if they are the same thing. Clearly, he also expects both to be active spaces politically. Jamal (34, FCE) also talks about his disillusionment with the embassy as a political space for Palestinians:

*The community and the embassy should open channels for people to unite and they should make it as the plan because they are the authorities. If you don't make it as a plan, and more organised structure – they need more effort and wider minds, more global thinking, how to create these connections, but it is not*



*happening. They could do much more. They have a lack of resources and this is important to have. It makes everyone act personally and when you act personally you don't act enough; you have to act as a group.*

Abir (38, Arabic teacher) also points out the fallacy of the embassy being a space of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and its consequent lack of representation of Palestinians in Athens:

*It's nothing special. They don't do that much. Maybe they prefer to be the only ones in contact with people there. They have to realise that they cannot be isolated and be the only ones with contact. They represent the PNA but not everyone supports them so what are they supposed to do; the embassy does not represent them. They need to realise this and renovate the staff of the embassies to make it fairer and more representative.*

In addition to this, some Palestinians in Athens feel that the embassy simply does not and cannot represent them as a result of its biased decisions and actions and the fact that it is PLO affiliated. Layla (38, FCE) asserts that “the embassy represents Yasser Arafat” without problematising it but in response to a question about those who do not like Arafat and who do not, therefore, necessarily feel that the embassy represents them, she acknowledges that this is indeed a problem for Palestinians in Athens. This is because there are a number of Palestinians, who despite agreeing on Arafat as an important symbol of the Palestinian people, feel that he has made many wrong decisions and that it is time for him to step down. They feel that more needs to be done politically in Greece. For example, Layla feels there are numerous political activities the embassy could engage in to ensure better treatment for Palestinians in Athens, considering its close links with the Greek government and its relative position of power. In response to a question on what she feels the embassy could do to help Palestinians, she says:

*To begin with – why don't they make it easier for us to come to Greece, for the people who don't have anywhere else to go? Why don't our residence permits*



*take on a better procedure? One that's easier than for others. Why couldn't we have them for longer, for 5 years, let's say?*

Liz: Who should be responsible for making things better for the Palestinians here?

Layla: *The embassy, they have to do more but I think some people are doing a good job and others aren't; it depends on the person. You have to have one aim, but I believe that sometimes that there is more than one. We need someone to be in charge, like a volunteer. I think we need somebody who understands many different mentalities because we have many different mentalities; we are from everywhere; we are not all the same. We need someone who understands the Palestinian problem; he can deal with us as individuals but he will also need some money or find a way to get us money, because you need money, as a minimum. That might be a good start.*

Liz: But there are the Unions, the Doctors' Union and the Workers' Union...

Layla: *But they are not strong. I have friends in them and they say that they are not strong. The problem is that we are stubborn as Palestinians so if we believe something we will not back down, so this creates problems. We don't compromise. I don't think we can do that – not all of us. I couldn't be this leader but if I found someone who found me things to do to help that fitted my lifestyle I would help, I would be the first to help; this is what I mean – we need someone who knows us and can deal with all sorts of situations. Like, he could say: Layla, you're busy, but since you're at home why don't you do this and this, to tell each of us what we can do according to our lives and situations. Why not? But who is this Palestinian?! (laughs).*

Layla's testimony illustrates the complexities involved in advocacy of the Palestinian cause that take place within different but interconnected times and unofficial diasporic spaces. Her perceptions of what 'help' should entail involves a mixture of ideas, people and places and of optimism and pessimism. She also



hints at the importance of using the home as a useful political space for women, such as herself who spend large amounts of time there.

### **The house as a diasporic ‘site of resistance’**

According to Armbruster (2002: 32), home “as a physical space can be a state of agency and lack thereof” (*ibid.*: 32). The useful conceptualisation of the house as a ‘state of agency’ reiterates it as a site or space of resistance. The house (or immediate domestic environment) can be seen as a hybrid, diasporic space, in which Palestinians are negotiating being Palestinian in Greece, being politicised and potentially engaging in advocacy as a result of cross-border connections. The house is a physical space where processes of existence and self as well as shared constructions of ‘unity’ and similarities (but also differences) are being articulated and represented on a daily basis. The house, notions of belonging, the ‘homeland’ and ‘being Palestinian’ cannot be separated because they are very much interconnected. As Thomas (1997: 111) points out:

*Dynamic intermeshing of difference reveals the complex ways in which domestic space is pivotal in the struggle of the dispersed to make a place within both a fractured relationship to the real or imagined homeland and within the wider society.*

The idea of the house as a political (but also social and cultural) diasporic space is a very powerful one. A house is a concrete physical space that surrounds people on an everyday basis and becomes their living environment. At the same time, a house can be symbolic of home and become a social and cultural space that is meaningful to people; it is the interaction of both that has the potential to make home a ‘site of resistance’ or political space. For those in diaspora, such as Palestinians, with ambiguous and often complex or problematic relations with the state and formal citizenship, the house can become an important informal political space. It is within such spaces that Palestinians in Athens may feel free to resist, express themselves politically and where activism in the form of advocacy may be triggered or carried out. Diasporic spaces may also serve to emphasize differences between themselves and Greek society. Palestinian houses



form material domestic spaces in Athens that “are never immune from the social and political worlds that enclose them” (Thomas 1997: 110). This influences the symbolic and physical relationships Palestinians in Greece have with Greek society as a whole as well as the situation in Palestine and the wider Middle East.

Palestinian houses in Athens constitute crucial political spaces, as they may be where advocacy and political activities are discussed, negotiated and carried out. However, the effects the spatial distribution of Palestinian dwellings in Athens can have on the tendency to be involved in material political activities must also be taken into account. Wealthier Palestinians who are married tend to live in large apartments in the more desirable middle to upper class outer suburbs of Athens such as Politia, Marousi, Melissia, Halandri and Glyfada. Their spatial location in the pleasant suburbs of Athens may be a factor in their tendencies to use their homes as politicised diasporic spaces, whether for meetings or as repositories for ‘homeland’ artefacts for example. At the same time, their physical distance from the venues of many demonstrations, in the centre of Athens may explain comments such as those by Mahmud (24, student). He feels that the urban geography of Athens as a large, spatially dispersed city, does not lend itself to close-knit political, social and cultural networks despite the attempts to create them by certain members and organisations within the Palestinian diaspora in Athens. Those Palestinians who work for a large Palestinian-owned company also seem to form their own circles and who although may feel politically infused, may have very little contact with lower income Palestinians.

Palestinians who are not so well off are more likely to live in more central locations in suburbs such as Petralona, Platia Attikis, Sepolia, Dafni and flats that are smaller and less comfortable. There are exceptions of course, but this generally seems to be the case. Palestinians who live in lower income areas appear to be more likely to meet up in cafes and public areas. In this way, their homes may have less symbolic importance and constitute spaces of material necessity; they may be seen more as spaces to simply eat, sleep and so on. It is important, therefore, to note the effects of the spatial geographies of homes in Athens that are linked to economic statuses as they can influence levels and networks of political agency and activism. The tendency of Palestinians living in



Athens to rent rather than own property may be symptomatic of high property prices, but it may also illustrate their feelings of transience and hybridity in Greece, and their continuous connections to Palestine. At the same time, it may serve to increase feelings of rootlessness and insecurity.

Blunt's work (1999) on embodied geographies of home illustrates the intimate relationships between the public and the private and between the spaces of domesticity and imperialism. Home is also seen as the space where colonial relations of power are exercised and maintained. In a similar vein, the Palestinian house can be seen as intimately connected to other informal diasporic spaces in Athens as well as to what are felt to be the colonised Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza and the coloniser itself, Israel. Palestinian perceptions of the power Israel has over Palestinians could be seen as finding its way into Palestinian domestic spaces in Athens through the cross-border connections Palestinians have. The house may be a space where colonial and postcolonial relations and connections may co-exist in disjointed and ambivalent ways, a space where Palestinian perceptions of Israel as the coloniser are often pervasive and a source of bitterness and anger. Palestinians may feel that they cannot escape the occupation and colonialism they perceive is occurring as it follows them into own houses because of their cross-border connections to Palestine/Israel, despite their physical separation from it in Athens. At the same time, this can galvanise processes of resistance. Power relations present in Palestine/Israel may be seen as being actively struggled against within the house, as Palestinians in Athens use cultural artefacts and customs to create 'Palestinian' spaces they feel comfortable and secure in and are able, as a result, to help them engage in potentially empowering political activities such as the advocacy of the Palestinian cause. Such diasporic spaces can, therefore, also be seen as spaces where colonial and postcolonial worlds may merge or clash. Their homes are both a material and symbolic reaction to what they perceive as Israeli imperialism and domination as well as attempted obliteration of their cultures and traditions (as well as lands).

It is within the house as a physical space where those who have been subject to discrimination or marginalisation are seen as potentially deriving a source of active and latent power and agency. The notion of 'homeplace' put



forward by hooks (1990) denotes the home as 'a site of resistance'. The home is seen as a haven, a reaffirmation and reconstruction of self and 'identity' away from the public world. One also needs to accept that while domestic space is being constructed as a 'Palestinian' environment to help encourage a 'stable' Palestinian 'identity', it is being negotiated as fractured, ambivalent and 'in-between'. As a hybrid, political space for Palestinians in Athens, the house is 'in-between' colonialism and postcolonialism, where Palestinians are resisting, subverting and attached to those whom they perceive as illegal occupiers (and, therefore, colonisers) of their land. The idea of the house as a political space and 'site of resistance', therefore, highlights the importance of decoupling 'identity' from political action and advocacy or, in other words, the idea that a stable or more essentialised 'identity' is needed in order to create and advocate change.

Although houses are private and domestic spaces, the fact that Palestinians are articulating and contesting issues such as politics, 'identity' and belonging as well as ways to be politically active in public spheres within them illustrates how arbitrary the division between public and private is. It is perhaps within houses that the connections between the personal and the political can be seen most clearly. The public and the private need to be thought of and conceptualised in tandem as each influences the other. The help or advocacy that finally materialises may often be the result of continuous negotiations in merging informal public and private spaces. Far from constituting isolated 'havens' of 'identity', diasporic houses need to be seen as spatially and temporally connected to host and homeland societies and politics. Palestinian houses in Athens are connected to schools, offices, demonstrations, social gatherings, the Parikia, the Unions and so forth; they cannot be thought of as arbitrarily disconnected.

Feminist writers have stressed that the home can become a political space where the domestic role of women as mothers and the everyday decisions they make there are as much political acts as practices and processes that take place in official, public spaces, which may be associated with men and the exclusion (and subordination and domination) of women (Pateman 1988). At the same time, the home itself can also constitute a site of exclusion and disempowerment for women if they feel isolated and marginalised. The temptation to engage in and reproduce essentialist notions of the private spaces such as the home as feminine



and public spaces as masculine has to be avoided (Staeheli 1996, cited in Freeman 2005). For Palestinians in Athens without access to formal political spaces, the house as a material space can become important political spaces for both men and women. The house is, however, a gendered space, as it is still women as wives and mothers who normally take on the role of 'making home' (Dwyer 2002) and, therefore, play an important part in helping to shape their family's constructions of 'Palestinian-ness'.

In the Middle Eastern context, Steinmann (2005: 94) cites the work of Ahmed (1992), amongst others, to illustrate the "cultural relativity of a feminine power within the domestic space". However, it is difficult to determine and generalise whether Palestinian women in Athens are 'objects' or 'subjects'. Although their houses could be perceived as politicised sites of resistance where their reaffirmations of ways to be Palestinian and their teaching of their children to be Palestinian may feel potentially empowering for them, at the same time, more Palestinian men than women appear to have Greek citizenship status and access to political spaces outside the home. At the same time, Palestinian women may be conforming to the domestic role that they feel their husbands and other Palestinians (both men and women) in Greece expect of them. Although this domestic role may be politicised, it is narrowly defined in terms of what it constitutes and women may not feel free to be political in other ways. Women, who have the job of looking after the family, may wish to attend political events, for example, but family commitments, such as looking after children and relatives may prevent them from going. In addition, those Palestinian women whose residency is linked to their husband's job, or who came to Greece because of their husbands (which includes the majority of Palestinian women) are potentially more vulnerable if they wish to leave their husbands. Silvey's (2005: 128) work on transnational Islam highlights the need to deconstruct stereotypes of Muslim women as either resistant or oppressed, but suggests that "lost in this dichotomization...is the much richer reality of women's shifting senses of power and religious subjectivities". Despite the fact that some Palestinian women are Christian, this statement appears applicable to all female participants and their relationships with men, politicisation and political advocacy.



### The house as a cultural, social and political space

It is important to understand that the house is also a space where political, cultural and social perceptions and manifestations of 'Palestinian-ness' may dynamically but also uneasily come together. To theorise the house as a hybrid political, social and cultural space for Palestinians in Athens, one has to take into account the intricate and diverse nature of Palestinian existence and the material and symbolic cross-border, public/private, colonial/postcolonial connections in Athens, which appears to influence their dynamic feelings and actions of political activism and advocacy. Exploring diasporic and hybrid spaces in which Palestinians are negotiating 'Palestinian-ness' dynamically and strategically may illustrate that politicisation and advocacy can potentially occur within such hybrid and diasporic spaces, despite feelings of insecurity, ambivalence and 'in-between-ness'. For many respondents, politicisation cannot be perceived as separate to the socio-cultural aspects of their lives, particularly if one sees public and private spaces as interconnected and merging. Therefore, dynamic constructions of being Palestinian and representations of difference and similarity are intimately related to politicisation and potential advocacy. Lacking formal Greek citizenship, many Palestinians are becoming adept at using the informal spaces they have available to them to initiate and carry out political activities that are grounded in Greece but that are also related to Palestine and Israel. The house, as a private, domestic space is, therefore, increasingly becoming a significant political space where the enactment and negotiation of cultural, social and political 'Palestinian-ness' and the framing and advocacy of political messages are occurring together. The extract below taken from a discussion with Layla (38, FCE) illustrates the connections between the house, being Palestinian, politicisation and political action very well:

*I have some Greek friends, colleagues in the company and now they don't buy any Israeli or American products. The Greek market is full of Israeli products. I go to Sklavenitis<sup>6</sup> and the potatoes are from Israel, the fruit from Israel, the dates, from Israel because I'm with the boycott and I don't buy at American or*

---

<sup>6</sup> A Greek supermarket chain.



*Israeli products. Even my son, with Coca Cola and with everything. First of all, I look for the Greek products to tell you the truth. One of my friends, she told me that she was in Sklavenitis with her mother and she wanted to buy a melon but it wasn't the season and she said to my friend, hey Vivi here is melon and she told me that she looked at where it was from and it was from Israel, so she put it back, so you have to try and influence people, because it's terrible, our situation is really bad. This is what we can do - we start with we can do ourselves. After that, you spread out – maybe this will work, but to tell you the truth, for 4 years, not a single American product has entered this house, my mouth and my son's mouth.*

Layla feels she is Palestinian and politicised with a cause to advocate. As she does not have Greek citizenship to allow her to participate in formal politics, she is trying to be politically active in whatever ways she can. This illustrates the political importance of everyday spaces such as the house. The political has permeated into many or all aspects of her life; she, like many Palestinians, cannot separate them out into neat compartments of political and non-political, or private and public. Lina (38, businesswoman) also illustrates the complex relationships between cultural, social and political identities within the public and private diasporic spaces:

*When I see any Arab celebrating in his country, so lets say the folklore of Jordan – we don't even have the right to have our folklore or if we have it, where to show it, so we suffer like that or sometimes when I'm explaining to my kids that they are half Greek, half Palestinian, they say okay, let's go to Palestine, their country. How can I explain to them that I can't go? Legally I can go, because I have the Greek passport, but as Lina I cannot go because I cannot go there and see all the humiliation, the way they treat us when we enter the country, the way they take off our clothes, the way they treat the Arabs, like I never went because I see on TV and I am already touched when I see how they push a man who's 80 years old or take off his shoes, I mean so many things that are so humiliating, that I really cannot take it to go there. Only from watching the TV Elizabeth, sometimes I feel palpitations. We are so bitter, very I mean just now talking*



*about it, I feel very...emotional, so should I teach my kids, should I let them know exactly about my history, how much we suffered from Israel, or should I not let them see that and feel bitter like we are, so sometimes I'm in-between, I'm trying not to let them have this hate, but I have it and sometimes I give it to them indirectly. You know what I mean?*

Liz: Yes. Do they go to an international school?

*Lina: They go to a Greek international school. Like we even have kids from Israel in the class. They play together, I never told them anything. I even invite these two kids when we have parties because I didn't want to exclude them as children, and unfortunately they came to the parties with their parents and I was trying to be very nice and civilised because it's not the child's fault and of course it was hard for me because the parents, one of the fathers is in the embassy and the other is in the Mossad; he works here for the security, so for me it was very hard, like I was trying to smile but because of the children I was trying to be civilised or hide my anger, like you know shouting or something but I was trying to be nice.*

Although Lina's house is a space in which she is trying to bring up her children as 'Palestinian' (despite the fact they are half Greek), it is also contested and problematic for her. Her experiences with Israelis in Greece is deeply upsetting for her as she feels she has to invite them into her home, destroying it potentially as a symbolic sanctuary of 'identity' and security away from what she feels is the injustice of the situation in Palestine. She may be seen as materially living out the clashes between the colonial and postcolonial as she confronts what she sees as the people who made her people 'suffer'. Although she finds these situations she is put in frustrating and they do not appear to be immediately empowering, her own need to advocate the Palestinian cause may be strengthened by such encounters. Her desire to teach her children as much as possible about Palestinian history (which is true of the majority of Palestinians in Athens) can



be seen as part of such advocacy and a form of concrete political activism and resistance, which takes place within the house.<sup>7</sup>

Ghada's (32, housewife) testimony below also depicts the close relationships between her perceived role as a mother of Palestinian children in a Palestinian house with a cause to advocate and how cross-border connections in the form of the mass media are involved:

*I was raised to love Palestine; it's in our hearts...I was raised always talking about it, so I am trying to do the same with my children. Like my daughter, who is fussy with her food. I make her watch the television, so she can see how the children in Palestine don't have enough food or water and how they are suffering...my children love Palestine, we have to love Palestine, so that we get it back*

The important role the house as a physical space in which political activities may take place is also illustrated by the experiences of Sa'id and Bilal. Sa'id, a young student, who is active within the GUPS and is very politicised (but has never been to Palestine) stresses the importance of his room as a Palestinian space, where he has "a huge Palestinian flag hanging on the wall". In his room at home is also where he listens to rap music, which he feels he can relate to because its themes include resistance, oppression and empowerment. His current perceptions of 'Palestinian-ness' as resistance have played a large role in his decision to become active within the Union, study political science and desire to become a diplomat in order to do what he can to help the Palestinian cause. Although it may appear that such perceptions are stable, they are not. Many factors have influenced Sa'id's politicised constructions of 'Palestinian-ness' and his potential to be politically active. These are, for example, the death of his father when he was young and his family's subsequent economic struggles as well as the area in which he lives, in the centre of Athens, where he has many networks with immigrants from other countries. He is openly frustrated with American foreign policy directed at the Middle East, condemns Israeli actions, listens to American music, wears Nike trainers (because "they are the best"), speaks Greek

---

<sup>7</sup> The teaching of children to be 'Palestinian' and politicised has been discussed in Chapter Five.



well and interacts with people from different places regularly and has never been to Palestine. It also becomes clear that his perceptions of 'Palestinian-ness' have also changed with his involvement in the Union as he has been forced to debate what it means to be Palestinian publicly. He has become used to consolidating his notions of what it means to be Palestinian into manageable and politicised 'chunks' for easy digestion by others such as the Greek media. These aspects of his life appear to illustrate the peculiar, and often contradictory nature and effects of hybridity for those in diaspora, even when they do not openly describe themselves as 'hybrid' or actively express the varying, diverse and interrelated times and spaces that affect them and their constructions of 'Palestinian-ness'.

Like Sa'id, Bilal (33, FCE) feels he is Palestinian and connected to Palestine, even though he has never been there. As a politicised non-citizen in Greece, he uses his cross-border connections and his office at home as an informal political space to be politically active, by creating slideshows and presentations on Palestinian issues, problems and the cause. He does this by taking images (of Palestinian children being beaten by Israeli soldiers, for example) and information (such as maps and statistics on the number of Palestinians killed during specific Israeli incursions into Gaza, for instance) from the internet and editing them into his own particular view of the cause that he wants to see disseminated. He then travels round Greece together with other Palestinians with similar views in his own time using the slideshows to advocate the Palestinian cause to Greeks in public meetings, illustrating the interconnected nature of diasporic spaces and networks and the public and the private. He feels compelled by events in Palestine/Israel in order to try and bring "Palestinian experiences and injustices to a wider audience, in my case, the Greeks". As he shows me one of his slideshows, he becomes very emotional and upset. His dynamic and politicised negotiations of 'Palestinian-ness' are visible as he directly translates his feelings of injustice, suffering and perceptions of the Palestinian cause, visions for the future and potential change into material political action through his technical abilities that he finds optimistic and potentially empowering.

Abir (38, teacher) uses her home as a space in which to conduct informal 'coffee mornings' or gatherings, in which domestic but also political issues are



discussed and debated with other Palestinian (and sometimes Arabic and Greek) women. Abir has been involved in a great deal of charity work and activism (see Appendix Ten) and it is through such meetings at her house and the houses of other Palestinians (and Greeks) that they are organised. For example, she has helped to set up a charity called 'One Euro for a Tree Campaign', whose aim is to help replant trees that Palestinians in Gaza claim have been uprooted by Israelis. This charity encourages people to give one euro, which then goes towards the replanting effort. The symbolic resonance of this charity's actions has to be noted. Many Palestinians in Athens view the uprooting of Palestinian trees as an assault on their livelihoods. The creation of and involvement in such charities can, therefore, be seen as constituting active forms of resistance in Greece to such perceived processes of loss and victimisation, occurring 'there'.

Abir feels able to be politically active and resist and she does so in a variety of ways, whenever she can. She illustrates (the testimony below forms part of Appendix Ten) that with the right social, cultural and political conditions in place, it is possible for Palestinians to feel empowered by what they are doing:

*This was the idea behind these booklets that we published about Palestine, because I feel here how supportive they [the Greeks] are and how they really feel the Palestinians suffering and so on, but they don't know the details. They think that there is a Palestinian state and they ask why don't the Palestinians have weapons, how come they cannot fight with tanks and things. I mean we have been under occupation for so many years, so I wanted so badly to explain to them because I know that in these times, people don't want to read a lot, they don't like to read, they don't have time, so I wanted to make it as simple as possible...I feel optimistic about these efforts we are making. I hope they will help.*

Abir has teamed up with other Palestinians she thinks have similar thoughts and opinions as her, such as Jamal, (34, FCE) in order to write and produce these booklets, to advocate, outline and clarify the Palestinian cause and the history of Palestinians in the Middle East. They were initially published in Greek, but are now also being published in English. This was something they felt they could do



to help the situation and which they did within their own homes, using personal, informal networks but also in association with several Greek friends. In terms of advocating the Palestinian cause, Jamal (34, FCE) feels that the booklets:

*will help, we have had feedback from the Greeks, for example, all the Greeks at work have it and they understand more but maybe they support us because they work with us and they are influenced by us but I think this book helped them understand what the facts are and the history. And the media is so much on the Israeli side; they have the power, the money, everything and their stories become fact and people, they cannot differentiate between who is the victim and who is the murderer and this is quite obvious. I'm talking about the younger generation. They don't even understand what's going on now, forget about the past. People only see, for example, with the suicide bombings they only see the action, they don't know or understand why it is happening, how a young girl or boy can have all this in their heart that makes them do something like that and kill themselves. For what? They must be suffering so much. I know, my aunt is living there. She has 9 children, with no education, no present, no future, no work. What is there to live for? How long can you live in this way? Seeing houses being demolished, so many complications, because if you see people constantly being murdered, you are ready to blow yourself up to get rid of your life. There is no hope.*

Liz: Do you feel you are doing more to help now than in the past when you were living in Kuwait or Egypt?

Jamal: *I am doing much more now.*

Liz: Why is that, do you think?

Jamal: *So many things – because of the position I am in, because here I have the flexibility, really we have the support of the Greeks and the freedom to do whatever we want and we need to do to help, within certain boundaries which we know and respect and so I think I'm doing much more here, even financial support and with this book we published. I would never have been able to do that*



*in the Arab world because there are so many restrictions, for us there are more restrictions because of our situation.*

Both Abir and Jamal appear to be actively trying to resist what they see as powerful Israeli influenced media and historical discourses; by publishing these booklets they are determined to present the silenced and marginalized 'Palestinian side' or versions of history and the situation in Palestine/Israel. These can be seen as tangible forms of resistance, which resonate with PLO tactics (outlined in Chapter Five) of using the narratives of suffering and injustice as a means to encourage 'struggle' and resistance. Palestinians often (actively or inadvertently) describe themselves as both victims and fighters, discriminated against and defiant.

Jamal's testimony also illustrates that negotiating feelings of injustice and despair, hope and perseverance can lead to informal political activism and processes of resistance, which have made him feel both disillusioned and empowered. He also highlights the role of the situation 'there' and how it can impact on action 'here' in Greece; the two are intimately connected. Helping also seems to depend on the connections and networks individuals have with one another and within different Palestinian social circles. It should be noted that Jamal has had great difficulties with his citizenship status, but these do not appear to have hindered him from trying to help, hence the importance of recognising the importance of unofficial spaces and activities as valid ways in which Palestinians may be politically active. Hardship and problems can also spur feelings of actions and activities that are perceived as potentially useful as well as useless. The house, as a personal, easily accessible and informal space may be perceived as one of the most inclusive sites for resistance and advocacy.

## **Conclusions**

Palestinians may associate politics (and therefore, political activism) with formal political spaces that they, on the whole, do not have access to. However, this research demonstrates that the problems Palestinians in Athens may encounter in terms of formal citizenship does not prevent them from feeling politicised, being politically active and advocating the Palestinian cause through informal diasporic



spaces. Helping in terms of supporting and advocating the Palestinian cause are seen as the major ways in which Palestinians in Athens feel they can help; yet most do not perceive such acts as political, despite the fact that they may admit to feeling and being politicised. Although for academic purposes, 'helping' and political activism or advocacy can be seen as the same, this section has illustrated that Palestinians in Athens tend to perceive them as distinct. For them, advocacy is seen more as a charitable and social rather than political act. Yet, such processes are also political, whether they are recognised as such or not, as such decisions cannot be divorced from negotiations of 'Palestinian-ness' as politicised and their need to advocate the Palestinian cause (or 'help') however they can. During the process of helping, they are demonstrating their affinity and solidarity with Palestinians (mainly in Palestine and also in refugee camps outside Palestine) they are attempting to help.

Evidence from this research suggests that Palestinians in Athens appear to feel resistant and hopeful, as well as despairing and pessimistic. Within single interviews and discussions, all these (often contradictory) feelings are often displayed at various times. It is very difficult to generalise about Palestinian feelings and perceptions of hope (and empowerment) and apathy (and disempowerment) within diasporic spaces in Athens. As illustrated in Chapter Five, there are tensions amongst Palestinians in Athens as they attempt to represent themselves as 'united' despite the realities of their inherent disunities and diversity. Many respondents appear to oscillate between feelings of hope, resistance, apathy and despair. Therefore, they may for example, talk of the importance of remaining united, of loving Palestine, of hope for the future and belief in the 'resistance' movement. At the same time, they also talk of feelings of helplessness, disillusionment, suffering and apathy due to their citizenship status, economic positions, their physical separation from and the ongoing issues 'there'.

As lived experiences, it could be argued that diasporic spaces become overtly political because for many Palestinians in Athens, the political and the personal are inextricably tied (for examples outside Greece see the autobiography of Ghada Karmi 2002 and Barghouti 2004). It makes sense, therefore, to assume that informal cultural and social spaces such as the home



and the Parikia are also political and politicised spaces, where 'Palestinian-ness', political ideas and thoughts are constantly and dynamically nourished, negotiated and contested as a result of cross-border connections and dealing with differences and similarities. For those in diaspora such as Palestinians, who are mainly powerless in the public political arena, diasporic spaces can become sites of symbolic and material political empowerment and resistance where they are actively able to feel and act as Palestinian. Diasporic spaces that Palestinians, irrespective of their citizenship statuses, are involved in illustrate how those in diaspora and migrants can practise their politicisation in the form of the advocacy of messages and cause in order to have their political voices heard. Forms and processes of resistance do not mean that Palestinians are creating or becoming homogenised subjects of change within such hybrid spaces. Although political diasporic spaces may be potentially empowering for Palestinians in Athens, they are also problematic and not free from tensions and conflicts. Above all, they are very complex because they encompass dynamic, strategic and fluid negotiations of cultural, social and political identities, power relations, 'in-between-ness' and colonial/postcolonial worlds that are symbolically and materially bounded and unbounded.



## **Conclusions: diasporic Palestinian identities, spaces and political advocacy**

This thesis has highlighted the importance of the critical understanding of diasporas not as closed, 'stable' 'ethnic' cultural groups or 'communities' but as situated, contingent and flexible, as both mobile and immobile, bounded and unbounded. It has demonstrated the beneficial use of combining geographical, postcolonial and diasporic perspectives in research that is committed to partially unravelling historicized and dynamic power relations, tensions, resistances and subjectivities through time and space. To this end, this thesis has examined the complex spatial cultural, social and political identities of Palestinians in Athens and has illustrated how they are fluid, strategic and hybrid as well as problematic and contested. Palestinians may negotiate their 'Palestinian-ness' as ambivalent and 'in-between' as they articulate notions of home and belonging that are unstable, liminal and de-territorialized but these are also infused with the need to be rooted, re-territorialized and connected to a distinct territorial homeland. The role of material and symbolic cross-border connections in such attachments has been shown to be important. Palestinians in Athens may use such connections to encourage notions of 'shared consciousness' and 'collective memory' that are seen as integral to constructions of 'unity', 'solidarity', 'identity' and resistance that underlie their cause. This thesis has highlighted not only how significant Palestinians in Athens feel these are but also, in the process, the internal tensions and conflicts over representations of differences and similarities.

Throughout this thesis, notions and realities of boundedness and unboundedness have been illustrated as relevant to understanding diasporic Palestinians in Athens. On the one hand, their multiple subjectivities and hybrid positionings within diasporic spaces may allow us to construct them as 'in-between', 'on the move' and able to transgress the geographical borders of Greece as their lives, spaces and identities 'here' are intimately connected to Palestine 'there'. In the process, there may be a decoupling of citizenship and 'national identity' as they acquire Greek citizenship status. Their physical



separation from the Middle East and Palestine, in particular, may be both empowering and resistant for them politically, as they feel able to engage in political advocacy within informal diasporic spaces in Greece.

On the other hand, their lives and identities are grounded and situated in Greece, where they feel both supported and 'foreign' or different. In reality, their negotiations of hybridity in diaspora are often problematic, confusing and ambivalent. Their lack of citizenship status (as well as ambiguous and difficult legal or residency status) and their material and symbolic connections to Palestine has also stimulated feelings of exile, displacement, statelessness, suffering and injustice resulting in perceptions of apathy and despair, as they may feel isolated and unable to participate politically because they lack access to the formal political spaces they see as necessary for political engagement. However, such feelings can also trigger the need to feel and be resistant and to get involved in the struggle to advocate the political cause. At the same time, they also have the propensity to encourage associations between citizenship, statehood and 'national identity' as a future Palestinian state specifically for Palestinians is usually seen as the only solution to current problems.

This thesis has shown that as a result of different (and uneven) cross-border connections, those in diaspora may be constructing notions of collectivity and 'shared consciousness' strategically but they may also negotiate their lives and identities as 'in-between' and hybrid, which can result in tensions and ambivalence. This can also have both positive and negative repercussions in terms of feelings of 'unity', disunity, hope, empowerment, despair and apathy about which it is difficult to generalise. On the one hand, Palestinians in Athens may be constructing themselves as active, resistant, hopeful, 'unified' and politicised Palestinian subjects as a result of their relations to Palestine. On the other hand, they also appear to be plagued by material problems associated with their citizenship and residency status and their separation and exile from their homeland, despite their networks. Diasporic spaces and cross-border connections can, therefore, be seen as enabling and empowering as well as limiting and hindering in terms of political advocacy. Such lobbying of the Palestinian cause appears to encourage positive perceptions of 'unity', but also negative images of



injustice and suffering, hence perhaps, increasing the potential for conflicting feelings of hope and despair.

The salience of thinking about diasporic political spaces is that the processes of resistance and advocacy that may take place within them can be conceptualised as connected to other times and spaces. Processes of de-territorialisation, re-territorialisation, connection and separation to Palestine as a territorial homeland are simultaneously occurring within diasporic spaces. Feelings of rootedness and attachment, as highlighted in Chapters Four and Five, appear to be crucial aspects within the advocacy of the Palestinian cause, that are imagined as encouraging ‘unity’, belief in a ‘shared consciousness’ and the need for a defined state in which to be politically active citizens. The notion of territory, as Elden (2005) reminds us, is still important. Such appropriations and uses of space (as de-territorialised and territorialised) for political means illustrates that realities of postcolonial resistance and cultural and political belonging are awkwardly and problematically played out through time and space, unsettling “political geographies’ tendency to see resistance politics as localized” (Featherstone 2003: 405). Postcolonial struggles of resistance may be seen as attempts to continuously carve out independent times and spaces. However free they may appear, they are, at the same time, necessarily connected to the coloniser, whether realised or not. Such struggles are characterised by processes and feelings of attachment and fluidity because the spaces in which these struggles take place are both bounded and unbounded as they force the ‘here’ and the ‘there’ (and the colonial and postcolonial) to come together in disjointed ways. Diasporic politics then becomes a “mixture of spatial fixity and unfixity” (Castree 2003, quoted in Elden 2005: 9), during which the ‘here’ and ‘there’ may have very different repercussions in terms of feelings of empowerment and resistance.

This research has illustrated the political and cultural dilemmas and opportunities the notion of hybridity has created to those in diaspora. Laclau (1996, cited in Moreiras 1999: 397) stresses that “hybridisation is not a marginal phenomenon but the very terrain in which contemporary political identities are constructed”. However, the Palestinian ‘subject’ of hybrid and multiple identification that is potentially created in diasporic spaces, as a potential agent



for change, may be conflicted and problematic as a result of having to negotiate 'here' and 'there' continuously within the processes and attempts at resistance and advocacy. This 'subject' also has to somehow articulate an ambivalent positioning between the political need for 'unity' and a distinct Palestinian 'identity' as part of the advocacy of the Palestinian cause; as a result, such subjects may be fractured and dislocated through time and space. Although it is tempting to claim that Bhabha's (1994) liminal and hybrid 'Third Spaces' and 'identities' make those involved in resistance struggles feel empowered, this thesis demonstrates that this is not always the case. Many Palestinians in Athens view their instability, fluidity and insecurity as a result of their non-citizenship status and complex residency issues as problematic and counterproductive to the advocacy of their cause. Therefore, this thesis has shown that in reality, 'identity' positionings are difficult to generalise about and can be very hard for Palestinians to deal with. For those in diaspora, often without the physical ability to be politically involved in Palestine, advocacy or the 'struggle' as it is often put, takes on very powerful political meanings and significance, as it is often perceived as one of the main things they can do to 'help' and be involved in the resistance and 'liberation' of Palestine. Yet, as I argue, the realities of such advocacy in terms of feelings and actions of resistance and empowerment are complex, contested, and intimately dependent on the fluid and strategic involvement in, negotiation and use of diasporic spaces as well as numerous other local and cross-border cultural, social and political factors. This case study of the Palestinian diaspora in Athens illustrates that it is hard to come to concrete conclusions about the relationships between 'Palestinian-ness', feelings of empowerment and resistance, as well as of political activism and informal diasporic spaces.

This thesis has depicted the difficult merging and clashing of colonial and postcolonial worlds and of different but jarring, crosscutting times and spaces within Palestinians' everyday lives in Greece. It is important to be able to theorise and understand the awkward and uneven merging between local, global cultural, social, political and economic aspects of people's lives. Flexible theoretical and practical frameworks are needed to map and unravel the complex and messy 'Third Spaces' and struggles of postcolonial/colonial lives and



positionings, as well as their constructions of resistances, hopes and apathies. As Pile (1997: 30) points out:

*resistance may reterritorialise space in various ways, in order to transform its meanings, undermine territory as a natural source of power, and enable territory to become a space of citizenship, democracy and freedom – within limits. Territories involve location, boundary and movement – and they will therefore overlap, be discontinuous and shifting as people seek alternative ways of living, alternative connections to the world.*

There is, therefore, a need for research into the new and emerging spaces in which resistance, politicisation, political activism, citizenship and belonging are negotiated, so that “a redefinition and re-symbolisation of political belonging and citizenship” can occur (Labelle and Midy 1999: 219). This may enable those with difficult and ambiguous relations to the state to feel less marginalized and excluded. At the same time, informal political spaces are also important. “Invisible citizen activity” (Mackian 1995: 212) may occur in such spaces as people make informal political decisions that affect their lives that are outside (but may also potentially influence) formal and official spaces of ‘identity’, citizenship and politics. In the process, however, as Marston (1995: 196) stresses:

*we must not pin our hopes on citizenship as a way of homogenising a complex civil society composed of groups within vastly different social, political and cultural identities. Thus it is not simply a question of including the formerly excluded in the larger community. The very concept of citizenship itself must be re-evaluated and transformed to reflect new relationships that are emerging in Europe (and elsewhere).*

It has been difficult to separate out the cultural, social and political aspects of Palestinian lives and identities that are intricately connected. There is clearly a



need for more nuanced understandings of the interrelations between different times and spaces; there is also a need for more subtle understandings of the cultural, social and political aspects of life for those in diaspora who feel the need to advocate causes and engage in homeland politics. Their strategic and fluid uses and negotiations of 'identity', citizenship, home and belonging, that may be difficult and have empowering and/or despairing repercussions, suggest the need to examine their processes of advocacy, resistance and politicisation as connected not only to their homelands, but also within the institutional and legally bounded constraints of the countries in which they live. Identities, like spaces, are relational, open-ended and inclusive but are also situated, powerful and exclusive. Careful and critical geographical analyses of the complex ways in which bounded and unbounded identities, times and spaces coalesce are crucial, as are the particular reasons and specific results of these coalescences, such as the realities of power relations, resistance, empowerment, apathy and marginalisation.

My analysis of diasporic spaces and identities may appear idealistic, yet it is based on the material lives, perceptions, experiences and emotions of diasporic peoples and a desire and commitment to explore and better understand their material and psychological realities, constructions and negotiations. Thinking and acting 'beyond the state' requires us to critically interrogate the language and terms that we use, albeit with unease, so that we may begin to potentially imagine what a more hybrid world characterised by increasing cross-border connections and (im)mobilities may actually look and feel like. Rather than imagining people in 'categories', we should perhaps try to explore in much more depth the networks, connections and relations people form with each other as they negotiate differences, similarities, power inequalities through time and space. The study of spaces can act as the study of dynamic nodes, in which people individually and in groups are able to physically and mentally position themselves as 'in-between' and as politically, socially and culturally (im)mobile. It is through such spatially and temporally (dis)located spaces and connections that they may potentially be able to come together, deal with differences peacefully and share visions of change that undermine local/global dichotomies and nation-state boundaries.



I have raised a number of extremely complicated issues within this thesis, as a result of the research carried out, to which there are no clear answers or easy solutions and it is not my intention to provide them. However, in a world that is constantly changing or moving, perhaps we, as academics, are sometimes slow to catch up. Such issues are thus worthy of further attention. Robins and Aksoy (2001: 709) stress the importance of “movement in the world, movement in the mind”, suggesting the need to radically interrogate the ways in which we, as social scientists, think about, analyse, represent and research the relationships between ‘movement’ and contemporary society. This thesis has made a small but significant contribution in these areas. These issues ought to be at the forefront of further geographical inquiry into the lives and identities of migrants and those in diaspora and their spatial and temporal interactions with processes of citizenship, politicisation and resistance.



## Appendices

### 1. List of Respondents<sup>1</sup>

Abbas: male, 26, student, interview carried out at fast food restaurant on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004, 8pm, in Greek (interview not taped). He is from Tulkarem, in the West Bank, where he was born and raised. He has lived in Athens for 3 years. He has a Palestinian identity card as well as Jordanian citizenship. He speaks Greek fairly well.

Abdul: male, 28, casual office worker, unmarried, interview carried out on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2004, 7pm at Goody's fast food restaurant, in Greek (interview not taped). He has lived in Athens for 9 years. He is from Bethlehem in the West Bank. He originally came as a student, went back to Bethlehem, where he worked but then returned to Athens in 2000. The last time he visited his family in Bethlehem was in 2001. He is having problems with his residence permit in Athens that he has to renew every year and which he is finding is becoming increasingly more difficult. He speaks Greek fluently.

Abdullah: male, 33, painter (self employed), interview carried out at his work, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2003, 4pm, in Greek (interview taped). He has lived in Athens for 11 years. He came originally as a student from the West Bank, where he was born and grew up. After finishing his studies, he decided to stay. He has a Jordanian passport and has a work permit, which he found hard to get and has to renew every year. He has been back to the West Bank twice, in 1997 and 2000. He speaks Greek fluently. He intends to apply for Greek citizenship soon, but is expecting it to be very difficult.

Abir: female, 38, teacher, married to Lebanese foreign company employee (FCE), mother of three children, interviews carried out on 14<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 10am at her home, in English (first interview taped, second not taped). She has lived in Athens for 7 years. She was born in Nablus, but moved with her parents to Lebanon. She got married in Lebanon and in 1996 left with her

---

<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms.



husband and children for Greece. She has what she calls a Lebanese passport as well as Jordanian citizenship. Her residency in Greece is linked to her husband's work and residence permit, which he has as a result of his job.

Ahmed: male, 34, FCE, married to a Palestinian, father of two children who go to an international school in Athens, interview carried out at his home, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 8pm, in English. His wife, Maha, was also present (interview taped). He has lived in Athens for 8 years. His family fled from the north of what is now Israel in 1948 to Syria, where he grew up. He has a Syrian passport and residency in Greece due to his job. His complex citizenship status prevents him from travelling to Palestine/Israel. He does, however, see his family in Syria every couple of years. He does not speak Greek, but understands some words.

Aiman: male, 14, not at school, but looking for work, his family are seeking asylum (but not in Greece), interview carried out at room in 'hotel' he has been sharing with his family for 6 months, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 8 pm, in English. This is a small, filthy room with shared bathroom facilities, which they have to pay 15 euros a night for (interview not taped). He speaks some Greek.

Bahira: female, 36, doctor, married to a Palestinian, mother of four children, interview carried out at her home, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 11am, in English (interview taped). She has been living in Athens for 13 years and has a Jordanian passport. She applied for Greek citizenship 10 years ago and is still waiting.

Bilal: male, 33, FCE, interview carried out at his home, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2003, 7pm in English (interview taped). His wife, Nadia (also Palestinian), was present. He has lived in Athens for six and a half years. His family were originally from Haifa, but fled to Lebanon in 1948, where he grew up and studied. He has special Lebanese travel documents that are given to Palestinians in Lebanon and has never been to Palestine. His residency in Greece is due to his job. He does not speak Greek well.



Costas: male, 32, official at Aliens Department, interview carried out at his home, 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2003, 6pm, in English (interview not taped).

Dina: female, 17, goes to an international school, has Palestinian father, Lebanese mother who are divorced, interview carried out at her father's home, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 11am, in English (interview taped). She has lived in Athens all her life (except for a brief period when she was three, when she lived in Lebanon) and has visited relatives in the West Bank three times. She used to visit her relatives in Lebanon almost every summer. She speaks Greek fluently. She learns Arabic at school but English is her first language. She speaks Greek more to her father and Arabic more to her mother. She has Greek citizenship.

Faeq: male, 45, FCE, married to a Palestinian, father of two children who go to international schools, interview carried out at his home, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 10am, in English (interview not taped). He has lived in Athens for 15 years. His family have lived in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United States and Lebanon since 1948. He was born in Lebanon and has special Lebanese travel documents. He tries to visit his family in Lebanon every year or so. He has a permanent residence permit, but not Greek citizenship. He has never been to Palestine/Israel. He speaks Greek.

Fadila: female, 30, housewife, mother of two young children, interview carried out at her home, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 8pm. Her husband, Majid (a Palestinian FCE) was also present (interview not taped). She has lived in Athens for 6 years. Her family was originally from Ramla, in what is now Israel. Her family fled to Jordan in 1948, where she was born. As a consequence, she has Jordanian citizenship, as well as Canadian citizenship, as she has also lived in Canada. Her residency in Greece is linked to her husband's residency and work permit, which he receives as a result of his job. She has never been to Palestine/Israel. She does not speak Greek, but understands some words.

Fawaz: male, 40, painter (self-employed), married to a Greek, interview carried out at his work, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2003, 4pm, in Greek (interview not taped). His two



children go to Greek schools. His brother, Abdullah was also present. He has lived in Athens for 15 years and came as a student originally from the West Bank, where he was born and raised. He speaks Greek fluently.

Ghada: female, 32, housewife, mother of three, married to Palestinian FCE, interview carried out at her home, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 11am, in English (interview taped). She has lived in Athens for 7 years. She was born and raised in Jordan, which she visits every summer. She has never been to Palestine/Israel. Her family were originally from villages around Haifa and moved to Jordan in 1967, after having lived in Jenin. Her residency is linked to her husband's, which he receives through his job. She does not speak Greek.

Hala: female, 24, living in Greece illegally, mother of four, married to Palestinian, interview carried out at basement 'home', room shared with 20 other Palestinians, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 5pm, in English (interview not taped). She and her family have been in Greece for six months. They are originally from Gaza and came illegally via a boat. She does not speak Greek, but understands some words.

Haleef: male, 55, embassy official, father of two, interviews carried out 16<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2003, 12 midday, in Greek (first interview taped, second not taped). He has lived in Athens for over thirty years. He is originally from Qualquilya, which he cannot visit due to former political activities in the West Bank before moving to Greece. He speaks Greek fluently.

Heela, female, 40, office worker, married to a Palestinian, mother of two, interview carried out at her home, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 8pm, in English (interview taped). She has been in Greece for 15 years. She was born and raised in Jordan, to which her parents moved to in 1948. She has never been to Palestine. She has Greek citizenship, which she has just been granted after what she felt was a long and difficult process, in which her application was rejected three times. She speaks Greek.



Jamal: male, 34, FCE, interview carried out at café, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 8pm. in English (interview taped). He has lived in Athens for 8 years. His mother is Egyptian, his father Palestinian and he considers himself Palestinian. His father's family were originally from Gaza. His father studied in Egypt, where he met his Egyptian wife. His parents then moved to Kuwait in 1966, where Jamal was raised. He has Egyptian travel documents because these are what his father has. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, he and his family were forced to leave and they went to Egypt. Jamal lived and worked there for five years before coming to Greece. He is having grave problems with his residency in Greece and is in imminent danger of being deported, despite help from lawyers working for the foreign company he is employed by (see Appendix Two). He speaks a little Greek.

Jamila: female, 20, student, member of GUPS, also works part-time, interview carried out at café, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 4pm, in Greek (interview taped, but not very clear due to background music). She has been in Greece since she was one and half. Her mother's family were originally from Safad, in what is now called Israel. Her father is Egyptian. They fled in 1948 to Lebanon and lived in a refugee camp, where she was born and lived before she came to Athens. When she left Lebanon, her parents were separated and her mother managed to find work in Cyprus through family friends, so they lived there for a year before moving to Athens, essentially to work. She has been back to Lebanon once, when she was twelve. She has never been to Palestine/Israel. She went to a Greek school and speaks Greek and Arabic fluently. She has an Egyptian passport, which she got because of her father. She has a student residence permit which allows her to live in Greece.

Ibrahim: male, 32, construction worker, married to a Palestinian, has a young child, interview carried out at his home, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2003, 8 pm, in Greek (interview taped). He has lived in Athens for 12 years. He originally came to study, but decided to stay and work. His grandparents fled to Syria in 1948 from Safad, which is now in Israel. He was born and raised in Syria. He has a work



and residence permit and is trying to get Greek citizenship, in order to be able go to Palestine, where he has never been. He speaks Greek fluently.

Issam: male, 53, engineer, leader of old GUPW, married to Greek, interview carried out at café, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2003, 7pm, in Greek/English (interview taped). He has lived in Athens for 30 years. His family were originally from Jaffa in what is now Israel. In 1948, they became refugees and lived in Kalandia camp, near Jerusalem. In 1967, his family moved to Jordan. In 1973, he went to Lebanon and then to Greece. He has a residence permit, as well as Jordanian citizenship. He speaks Greek fluently.

Karim: male, 24, student, interview carried out at restaurant, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2004, 2pm, in Greek (interview not taped). He has lived in Greece one year and three months. He is originally from Beit Zara, a suburb of Bethlehem, but moved to Greece from Jordan, where he grew up. He has a Palestinian identity card as well as Jordanian citizenship. He is supposed to have a student residence permit, which he has been trying to get, but is finding the bureaucracy involved difficult. He speaks Greek, but is not fluent.

Khalid: male, 43, self employed garage owner, father of two who go to Greek school, interview carried out at his home, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2003, 8pm in Greek. His wife, Sunya (also Palestinian), was present (interview taped). He has been in Athens for 15 years. His family were originally from Safad, in what is now Israel and they fled to Syria in 1948, where Khalid was born and raised. He came originally for one year and then decided to stay. He originally came with a tourist visa, and then managed to get a student permit to allow him to come and go, but never studied. He worked instead and now has a residence permit although he applied for Greek citizenship three years ago, which he expects to get soon as he has contacts that are helping him out. He has visited his family in Syria 6 times since living in Athens. He speaks Greek fluently.

Layla: female, 38, FCE, divorced from Palestinian husband, mother of one child who goes to an international school, interview carried out at her home, 14<sup>th</sup>



December 2003, 4 pm, in English (interview taped). She has been in Greece for 18 years. She came as a student and then stayed. Her family was originally from Accre, in what is now Israel. They fled to Lebanon in 1948, which is where she was born and lived until 1975 when the family moved to Abu Dhabi, where they still live. Her Lebanese travel documents make travelling to anywhere apart from Lebanon problematic. She still has relatives in Lebanon, whom she visits occasionally. The last time was in 2003. She has never been to Palestine/Israel, but is trying to get Greek citizenship. She speaks Greek, but is not fluent.

Lina: female, 38, businesswoman, married to a Greek, mother of two, interview carried out at her home, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 5pm, in English (interview taped). She has lived in Athens for 18 years. Her father was Palestinian; her mother was Lebanese. Her father's family were originally from Jaffa in what is now Israel. She grew up in Lebanon, but moved to Jordan, where she finished high school and from where she moved to Greece in order to study. She has Greek citizenship and admits that before she had it, things were much more difficult for her in Greece. She speaks Greek fluently. She has never been to Palestine.

Maha: female, 29, housewife, mother of two children, who go to international schools, interview carried out at her home, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 8pm, in English. Her husband, Ahmed (a Palestinian FCE), was also present (interview taped). She has been in Greece for 8 years. She is from Nablus, in the West Bank but because of the current situation, she has not visited her family since 1997. She has what she calls a Palestinian identity card, but she also has a Jordanian passport as she worked there after she finished university at Bir Zeit, in the West Bank. In Greece, her residency is linked to her husband's residency and work permit, which he receives because of his job. She does not speak Greek, but understands a little.

Mahmud: male, 24, student, member of GUPS, interview carried out at the Parikia, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 7pm, in Greek (interview taped). He has lived in Athens for 5 and half years. He comes from Beit Zahour, which is a village near



Bethlehem, where he grew up. He has a Palestinian identity card and a student residence permit (although he also works part-time). He speaks Greek fluently.

Majid: male, 36, FCE, father of two young children, interview carried out at his home, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 8pm, in English (interview not taped). His wife, Fadila (also Palestinian), was present. He has lived in Athens for six years. His family was originally from a small village, Safad, near the Golan Heights but fled to Lebanon in 1948, where he was born and grew up. He has Lebanese travel documents that are especially for Palestinians, but also Canadian citizenship as he has lived there with his wife. He has temporary residency and a work permit in Greece due to his job. He does not speak Greek, but understands a little.

Maria: female, 31, housewife, Greek married to Palestinian businessman, mother of two, interview carried out at Parikia, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2003, 5pm, in Greek (interview not taped). She attends Arabic lessons at the Parikia every week and has visited Palestine (the West Bank) 4 times with her husband and children, who also have Arabic lessons there.

Marwan: male, 23, student, member of GUPS, interview carried out at Parikia, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 9pm, in Greek (interview taped). He has lived in Greece for 3 years. He was born in Athens, because his Palestinian father had come to Greece to study, got married to a Palestinian and had Marwan. After 7 years, his mother died, and he went to Jordan to be looked after by relatives until he decided to come to Greece to study. He has Greek and Jordanian citizenship. He speaks Greek well

Masud: male, 26, construction worker, interviews carried out 9<sup>th</sup> June 2003, 8pm at his home, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 9pm, at fast food restaurant, in English (interviews not taped). He has lived in Greece for 4 years. He is from Gaza and came to Athens because he was wounded and was subsequently treated at an Athenian hospital. He has a residence and work permit as well as a Palestinian



identity card. It is difficult for him to return to Gaza because of political activities he was involved in before he left.

Mohammed: male, 43, teacher, father of two, interviews carried out at cultural event, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 9pm, at his home, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2003, fast food restaurant, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 8 pm, 17<sup>th</sup> January 2004, at fast food restaurant, 8pm, in English (only interview carried out at restaurant taped, but not very clear due to background noise). He has been living in Athens for 15 years. His family were originally from Gaza. He came to Greece on a tourist visa intending to stay a month, but is now a legal resident. This is despite the many problems he had obtaining residency in Greece as a political refugee, which took over 6 years. He has a Jordanian passport.

Mounif: male, 35, unemployed although works sporadically as a labourer and is a telecommunications engineer by profession interview carried out at fast food restaurant, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 10pm, in English (interview not taped). He is in Athens illegally, having arrived by boat 6 months ago, from Lebanon, where his family fled to in 1948. He is trying to get to Germany where he studied – he speaks German fluently (even though he has a brother living in Athens). He speaks a little Greek.

Mourid: male, 38, FCE, father of two young children, interview carried out 9<sup>th</sup> January 2004 at his home, 9pm, in English. His wife, Samira (also Palestinian), was present (interview taped). He has lived in Athens for 10 years. He is from the West Bank. His father left the West Bank to study in Lebanon in 1948, and then went to Jordan and then Kuwait, where Mourid was born and raised. Mourid lived in Kuwait until he was 25, after which he went to Jordan for a couple of years before moving to Greece. The last time he went to the West Bank was 20 years ago, but after his grandfather who lived there died, he was not allowed to go because he no longer had immediate relatives living there. He has a Jordanian passport. His residency in Greece is linked to his job. He speaks a little Greek.



Mustafa: male, 42, unemployed, interview carried out at café, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 9pm, in Greek (interview taped). He has lived in Greece for 17 years. His family are from Hebron, in the West Bank, where he was born and grew up. He came as a student and decided to stay. He actually started studying in Jordan, but went for a visit to the West bank in 1982 and was not allowed to leave for 3 years and when he was, he was not able to get permission to go to Jordan. It was then that he decided to come to Greece because he had heard of the support they gave Palestinian students. He has been back 3 times since he left. The last time was in 2000; he has not been able to go since because of the current situation. He is not in Greece legally; he is still apparently waiting to get his residence permit. He has a Palestinian identity card. He speaks Greek fluently.

Nabil: male, 37, engineer/deputy mayor, divorced from Greek wife, interview carried out at Parikia, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2003, 6pm, in English/Greek (interview not taped). He has lived in Athens for 21 years. He is originally from the West Bank but his family moved to Jordan in 1967, where he grew up. He originally came to Greece to study and decided to stay. He is a Greek citizen and speaks Greek fluently.

Nadia: female, 24, housewife, interview carried out at her home, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2003, 7 pm. Her husband, Bilal, (a Palestinian FCE) was present (interview taped). She has lived in Athens for six and a half years. Her family was originally from what is now Israel and fled to Lebanon, where she was born and grew up. Her residency in Greece is linked to her husband's job. She is doing a Greek language course as she is keen to learn Greek.

Nafeesa: female, 25, asylum seeker, mother of three, interviews carried out at basement 'home', a room she shared with 20 other Palestinians (mostly asylum seekers too), 9<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 8pm, and on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 11am, going to medical charities in centre of Athens, in broken English and with the help of a translator (interview not taped). She has been in Greece for 6 months (3 in an asylum seeker holding centre on an Aegean island and 3 in Athens). She is from Gaza. She does not speak Greek, but understands some words.



Nisreen: female, 23, student, member of GUPS (president), interview carried out at a café, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2003, in English (interview taped). Her family is from Nablus (West Bank) and Accre, in what is now called Israel. She was born and raised in Lebanon, but her family moved to Cyprus when she was at high school. Soon after, they moved to Greece because of her father's job, where she finished school (she attended the Libyan school in Athens). She is a registered refugee and has to renew her residence permit every five years. She also appears to have what she calls a refugee passport, which she has to renew every 2 years and with which she can travel wherever she wants. She does not want to become a Greek citizen. She has never been to Palestine/Israel. She speaks Greek fluently.

Omar: male, 20, student, interview carried out at café, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2003, 6pm, in English (interview taped). He was born in Athens has lived there all his life. His father's family are originally from Qualquilya, West Bank. He has been there to visit relatives three times. The last time was six years ago. His mother is Lebanese. He went to an international school in Athens, before entering university. He speaks English and Greek fluently. He also speaks some Arabic. He has Greek citizenship.

Rafat: male, 48, FCE, representative of PLO in Athens, interview carried out at his office, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 10am, in Greek (interview taped although we were interrupted often by the phone). He is married to Greek and they have 2 children who go to an international school. He is from the West Bank. He has been living in Greece for 28 years and came originally to study. For 14 years after he left, he was not allowed to return due to the political activities he was involved in before he left. Since then, he has been allowed to go twice. He is not a Greek citizen; he has a residence permit, which he has to renew every 5 years. He has a Jordanian passport and Palestinian identity card. He speaks Greek fluently.

Rafiq: male, 40, restaurant worker (has had several unskilled jobs since he has been in Greece), interviews carried out at the Parikia, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2003, 8.30 pm, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2003, 8pm, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2003, 8pm, in English (interviews not taped). He has lived in Greece for twenty years and came as a student, but never finished his



degree. He has had trouble with his residency. He is now applying for political asylum. He is originally from Gaza, but has never been back, as he is not allowed due to his political connections and fact that he used to work for the PLO. He speaks Greek fluently.

Rania: female, 38, FCE, married to a Palestinian, mother of two children who go to international schools, interview carried out at her home, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 8pm, in English (interview taped). All her immediate family were present (including her mother, who was on a visit from Ramallah). She has been in Athens for 14 years as a result of her husband, who has been living in Athens for over 30 years. She was born and grew up in Ramallah. Her family were originally displaced from Jaffa, in what is now Israel. She went to Jordan after she finished high school, where she started working. She has not been back to Ramallah for 8 years. She has Jordanian citizenship. Her Palestinian identity card is kept at the border when she leaves the West Bank and she has to go back every 3 years to renew it. The last time she renewed it, she was not allowed to enter the West Bank and she is also scared of going in case she is not able to leave as a result of all the regulations and procedures she perceives there are there. She goes to Jordan every year to visit family she has there. Her husband, as well as her children, (who were born in Athens) has Greek citizenship; she has a residence and work permit to live in Greece. She may herself apply for Greek citizenship in the future. She speaks Greek fairly well.

Rashid: male, 41, self-employed (member of old GUPW), married to Greek, interview carried out at café, 20<sup>th</sup> January, 8pm, in English (interview not taped). He has been in Athens 22 years. He came originally as a student and stayed to work, out of necessity. His family were originally from the north of what is now called Israel but fled in 1948 to Lebanon, where he grew up. He has Lebanese travel documents, but cannot travel with them, even to Lebanon. He tried to go back when his father was dying but was not allowed – he does not know why. He applied for Greek citizenship in 1986 and is still waiting; at present, there is no other country he is allowed to go to so is stuck in Athens.



Sa'id: male, 25, student, member of GUPS, interview carried out at fast food restaurant, 24th October 2004, 4pm, in English (interview taped). His family were originally from Jenin, West Bank. They then moved to Kuwait. He was born in Jordan (his mother went there especially to have him), lived in Kuwait for a couple of years and then in Jordan for a couple of months before moving to Greece at the age of three. He has a Jordanian passport and a student residence permit, which allows him to study, but not work (although he does so part-time). He speaks Greek fluently.

Sami: male, 57, doctor turned politician, divorced from Greek wife, has two children, interview carried out at his home, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 10pm, in Greek (interview taped). He has been in Greece for 35 years. He came originally as a student and decided to stay. His family are from what is now Israel but moved to Jordan in 1948, where he grew up and lived before coming to Greece. He has Greek citizenship. He speaks Greek fluently. He visits his family in Jordan every couple of years.

Samira: female, 38, housewife/artist, mother of two young children, interview carried out at her home, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 9pm, in English. Her husband, Mourid (a Palestinian FCE), was also present (interview taped). She has been in Athens for 15 years. She came with her parents, and went to an American college in Athens, after having studied in England and working for a few years in Jordan, where her parents lived before moving to Greece. Her father is from what used to be called Lid and is now called Tel Aviv. Her mother is from Jerusalem. They both left in 1948. Her father's family moved to Jordan and her mother's family moved to Syria. Once married, her parents lived in Jordan. After a few years, her father got a job in Saudi Arabia, where Samira was born. She speaks Greek well.

Sana: female, 34, housewife, mother of two who go to international schools, married to Palestinian FCE, interview carried out at her home, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 10.30 am, in English (interview taped). Her parents left Qualqilya, in the West Bank in 1967 and moved to Kuwait, where she was born. She has a Jordanian passport. She was 8 years old the last time she visited Qualquilya.



where relatives on her father's side live. Her family on her mother's side live in Jordan and it them she visits as often as she can.

Sunya: female, 32, housewife, married to self-employed Palestinian, mother of two children who go to Greek school, interview carried out at her home, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2003, 8pm, in Greek (interview taped). Her husband Khalid was present some of the time. Her family is originally from what is now Israel and fled to Syria, where she was born and raised. She came to Greece because of her husband, whom she met when he was on holiday in Syria. She speaks Greek, but is also having Greek lessons. She has applied for Greek citizenship, which she expects to get after 5 years.

Suzanna: female, 37, housewife, married to Lebanese FCE, mother of three children who go to international schools, interview carried out at café, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 10am, in English (interview not taped). She has lived in Athens for 18 years. She grew up in Lebanon and has Lebanese citizenship. Her residency in Greece is linked to her husband's residency and work permit he has through his job. She speaks some Greek.

Tamara: female, 32, researcher, married to Greek, interview carried out at café, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2004, 1pm, in English (interview taped). She is originally from Gaza, which she visits often. She has lived in Athens for six years and has a residence permit because she is married to Greek. She came as a result of her husband, whom she met in the United States, where she studied.

Taisir: male, 15, asylum seeker, interviews carried out at his basement 'home', a large room shared with another 20 Palestinians in a similar position, sharing one small bathroom, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2003 6pm, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2003, 10am, on a visit to Greek NGOs dealing with refugees, in English (interview not taped). He has been in Athens for a year and is looking for temporary jobs. He speaks a little Greek.



Tariq: male, 60, doctor, married to Greek, father of two, interview carried out at hospital where he works, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2003, 9 am, in Greek (interview taped). He has been in Greece for 38 years. He came as a student and decided to stay. His family were refugees from what is now Israel and fled to Jordan in 1948, where he was born and raised. He has Greek citizenship, which he has had since 1986 and which he found very hard to obtain (the decisions in the past were down to individual Ministers, unlike now, where there are certain criteria that have to be met, such as length of residence, number of children and so forth). He has never been to what is now Israel, but went to Jerusalem in 2001. He goes to Jordan every year. He speaks Greek fluently.

Tarub: female, 39, asylum seeker, widow, mother of three, interviews carried out at her room in a 'hotel' she has been living in for the last 6 months, 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2003, 8pm, in English, using a translator (interview not taped). This is a hotel in which inhabitants (mostly recent immigrants) pay 15 euros a night for unsanitary conditions – a small, dirty room, shared bathrooms, in which whole families live. In her case, she was sharing it with her three sons. She does not speak Greek.

Walid, male, 35, FCE, married to Palestinian, father of one, interview carried out 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003, 10 am, at work, in English. His family are from Qualquilya, in the West Bank, where he was born and grew up. He has lived in Athens for 10 years. He has a Palestinian identity card and his residency in Greece is linked to his job. He speaks a little Greek.

Wihad, female, 28, housewife, mother of two who go to international schools, married to Palestinian FCE, interview carried out at Parikia, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2003, 7pm, in English (interview not taped). She has lived in Athens for five years. Her family were originally from what is now Israel. They left in 1947 and moved to Kuwait and then to Saudi Arabia, where she was raised. They finally moved to Jordan, where she met her husband. She is in Greece because of her husband and her residency is linked to his job. She does not speak Greek and has never been to Palestine.



## 2. Jamal's testimony on his mobility restrictions

Jamal: *I have Egyptian travel documents – they are the worst travel documents used by the Palestinians because actually we don't have the right to go back to Egypt and it causes us a lot of problems until now.*

Liz: How come you have these travel documents?

Jamal: *First because we are from Gaza and Gaza after the wars in 1948 was given to Egypt and West Bank was given to Jordan and those living there were given Jordanian passports and those of us in Gaza were given Egyptian travel documents.*

Liz: Okay, so you have these documents and they have given you a lot of trouble?

Jamal: *Yes, I have so many stories to tell.*

Liz: Tell me one or two of them.

Jamal: *I can tell you the latest one. I have been in Greece for almost 9 years and I have been given residence by my job for the last 8. Suddenly, they started saying that I am not Palestinian.*

Liz: Who said this?

Jamal: *The people at IKA (Social Insurance), the authorities. They started saying that I was not Palestinian, but Egyptian, but I'm not Egyptian and they said that I have to pay IKA because there is an agreement between the government and Egypt that citizens of both countries pay IKA in both countries so after 8 years they realised that I was not Palestinian although on my permit it wrote Palestinian, suddenly they said, no you are Egyptian and I have to pay the IKA for the last 8 years and double the amount as a penalty, which is something like*



*\$150,000, which of course I couldn't pay so for the last 9 months I am staying in Greece without legal status, I cannot move or travel, I cannot go to my family who live in Egypt and I'm stuck and I don't know if it will be solved or not. Ok my company is trying, but until now I don't know whether they will manage to solve it or not. The lawyers are trying and I have some help from the Palestinian embassy who have volunteered to help but with no success. If I am caught, I could be deported to where I don't know, because there is no country I can go to. I don't really belong anywhere; there is nowhere I can go to legally. I am trapped here; it's a prison for me.*

Liz: It sounds like a terrible situation.

Jamal: *Actually this is my situation for the last 34 years – this is how old I am. Because people see you as someone without a state, without citizenship and they don't want to take you and the ones that take you see you as a burden.*

Liz: Have you ever been back to where your parents are originally from?

Jamal: *My mother is Egyptian and my father is Palestinian; I got my nationality from my father, but in Egypt they don't give you the nationality if your mother is Egyptian, no – it goes through the father. All of us lived in Kuwait.*

Liz: But have you ever been to Gaza?

Jamal: *Yes, 2 times. The first time I went I was 6 years old and I was very happy because it was the first time that I felt that I had a home, that I have a country, a land that I can walk on without fear. Then I went to Gaza again with my father, my sister and my brother when I was 12 and the last time I was there I was 17 so a long time ago. Actually my grandparents lived there but not in their original home but Rafah, they had to move to close to the Egyptian border. My father helped to build them a house and they stayed there until they passed away.*



Liz: So, how come your parents decided to move then?

Jamal: *My father went to Kuwait in 1966. Actually he finished his studies in Egypt and then he got married and they moved to Kuwait to Egypt.*

Liz: And he didn't have any problems moving around?

Jamal: *No, then it was easier, no complications – people were feeling more sympathetic towards us and there was no corruption in the politics.*

Liz: When did things start to change then?

Jamal: *Okay, things started changing severely for my status after the Gulf War regarding movement between countries, because after the war the countries began to realise that if they got stuck with the Palestinians you can send them nowhere, and you know even when I moved from Kuwait, during the war my parents were on vacation in Egypt and I was living in Kuwait because I was a teacher at Kuwait University – I was giving some summer classes and they attacked there. And I had to move – there was no communication, they didn't know if I was alive or dead and so I had to try and go to Egypt. I managed with some friends with Jordanian passports although they were Palestinians, to go to Jordan and it was quite an adventure. We went with their car, I left everything in Kuwait. I went through Iraq with the car and on the Jordanian border they didn't allow me in although I had a visa - now I cannot go to Jordan at all even if my residence was okay.*

Liz: Really?

Jamal: *No, after the Gulf war, many of the countries, Egypt, Jordan forbid the Palestinians from going there.*

Liz: So where are you allowed to go with your residence permit here?



Jamal: *I can go to most countries in Europe – I have been to Mexico, America, but to the Arabic countries, no – they started to give us a hard time, for what reason I don't know. I wish I had an explanation. My mother is Egyptian, I was born there, my family is there but I cannot go there. Recently I could go but straight after the war I couldn't. Let me continue with my story. So at the Jordanian border, they stopped me for 4 or 5 hours; they would not let me in and I could not go back so I was stuck. Luckily there was a Greek officer there with us and he got permission to go to Amman and he would get a paper that I would not stay longer than one day, so I went to my family there and her eldest boy took me to the police station and we wrote that I would not stay for more than 1 week. I stayed for 1 week illegally but I had to. After this, I managed to get a visa to Egypt but actually this visa was no good because once I travelled, they stopped me at the borders for 2 days because they did not accept the visa and they said it was illegal, so after 2 days my family in Egypt managed to get the approval from someone high in the Ministries and I managed to get in but I stayed for 5 years with no legal status, no residence, nothing, no documents, until I got the opportunity to work in Athens and I came here.*

Liz: So, it must have been a really big thing for you getting this job here?

Jamal: *Yes. So I worked in Egypt illegally and so many things happened; it was a tough time.*

Liz: So the last 3 years you were able to travel to Egypt?

Jamal: *It was easier, but it was not easy because after the Gulf war, Palestinians were not allowed to go to Egypt, even those who held Egyptian travel documents.*

Liz: It's very confusing.

Jamal: *Yes, only those who were Jordanian Palestinian were allowed, for those holding Lebanese travel documents it was very difficult and for us it was*



*impossible. At that time, it was strange, I came to Greece; I stayed for 2 years and then I couldn't go back but after that I managed to find someone to help me to go back.*

Liz: So when was the last time that you saw your family?

Jamal: *April.*

Liz: Do they come here as well?

Jamal: *Once, they managed to come, but it's difficult for them too because there's something strange in Europe. For some period they said that we don't accept travel documents to enter Europe.*

Liz: So that doesn't still happen?

Jamal: *No, it was only for 4, 5 months and the Palestinian embassy made a great effort to get me this because no Palestinian with a travel document could travel there – nobody knows why, so what I am trying to say is that all the time you have to deal with laws that affect you but you don't know why things change or what is going to happen from one day to the next.*

Liz: You must feel very insecure.

Jamal: *More than that – it's part of our lives to feel insecure; you get used to it, but sometimes it gets too much; the pressure is too much.*

### **3. Lina's testimony on feelings of injustice and suffering**

*I have many friends, with no reason with no interfering in any political group, they have been in jail for 3 years, 9 years, they were tortured, they took out their nails, anyway I will not tell you what they did to them maybe you will not sleep at night, really, some of them because I knew them many years, they had nothing*



to do with any political group but when they pick up, lets say they are looking for an active person, they think he is hiding in this village, they go there and they pick up all the kids who are in his age and they are kids, because they are from 12 to 20, teenagers, they pick them up and they start torturing them and that boy is not a criminal, he is just trying to fight for his country, so of course there they don't have the right to talk, because even when they don't talk, they are tortured, so it's a big risk...All my life, Elizabeth, until now, we are occupied and every day, we hear that 10 Palestinians were killed, 100 Palestinians are killed, every 2 or 3 years one of my friends is in jail, we don't know why, we don't know when he is coming out and I knew this girl. She was Palestinian living in Lebanon. She was living in a Palestinian camp in Beirut, in Lebanon and when the war happened, the Israelis took her because she was Palestinian and she was tortured for 4 years at the Israeli jail without doing anything; she was just a student. When she came out, she told us what happened to her and the fault she did, she was just Palestinian. They used to let them sit in a room full of water and keep the electricity on for more than one hour; I mean they did really terrible things. I wonder how they think about these diabolic things you know what I mean? Of course not to mention killing pregnant women, killing babies, in this case there is no rule for war. We know from the movies, from history that war is between man and man, between 2 camps with weapons. In our case, it's them, with all the equipment, you know, I mean the Arabs, sometimes don't even have shoes to wear; they are with one pair of trousers and stones. They have all the equipment, kalashnikovs, anything you want and they are killing men, women, children, pregnant women; they are raping women there most of the time, I mean it happens, so socially, it's very bad and look I knew this girl, she was a friend of mine. She lived in Ramallah; she was 38 and suddenly they discovered that she had cancer and her father wanted to send her for chemotherapy and it was the time last year in march, they had troubles in Ramallah, so she couldn't reach the hospital and she was suffering because she needed surgery. Anyway, she died 2 months after, so you see, the human being in Palestine has no human rights, nothing, nothing.



I start my next question but I notice that she has started crying, so I apologize and stop, telling her not to worry. She gets up and goes to get a tissue, and to recompose herself.

Lina: *I'm sorry.*

Liz: Don't worry; it's a very difficult issue.

Lina: *Look, Elizabeth, like many times, we think, okay, we have the occupation down there, like you could think, I am a Palestinian girl, let's say I live there and I don't interfere in politics, I'll continue studying, but it's not like that. Everyone is affected, everyone, I mean you understand what I'm saying? (raises her voice slightly, getting a little indignant). Just because we exist, they kill us. And what really one of the million things that hurt is that they kill continuously the Palestinians and when 1 Israeli soldier, not woman, but a soldier is killed, they put it on the CNN and they make a story about it and they make it like, a huge thing, but what about our children? By the way, do you want to see some pictures?*

Liz: Yes, yes

She shows me a book on the Palestinians (It is titled 'The Palestinians', by Jonathan Dimbleby) and some large photos of conflicts between the Israelis and Palestinians, wounded Palestinians and Palestinian children in the streets.

Lina: *Here, this means the boy who's fighting for Palestine. You know Elizabeth, if you look through any, look at this, if you look at any Arab who lives there, even our features are different because of the pressure that we have. You know what I mean? Our children, they don't have a childhood like any other child in the world, but even a child who's 3 years old, without exaggeration, you see pain in their face.*

Liz: Because of what they have had to experience?



Lina: *Like last year in Jenin, they killed left and right. They didn't even let – I'll tell you this specific case. This man, he killed all his family in his house. His house was very small, 2 rooms. They killed his wife and 2 sons and the brother, so after 2, 3 days, the bodies started to stink in the house and he was trying to open the door just to put the bodies outside, so when he opened the door, they were shooting on him, not even letting him put the bodies outside. The other case that I have been told about personally, not from the news. They got this mother who was maybe 60 years old and she had 2 sons and they put her in the yard and they tortured her son in front of her; they killed him after and she was begging them to kill her because she couldn't take the suffering and they didn't kill her. I mean, it's so much, it's so much against humanity what they do and then Bush comes on the television and he is talking about the peace. What peace? Really, what peace? (getting very agitated) Just because we exist, they kill us.*

#### **4. Discussion with Maha and Ahmed on 'unity', political representation and participation**

Liz: For Palestinians such as yourself, living outside this area, how does your voice get heard?

Ahmed: *I mean, okay, we are in the diaspora, before the Oslo Accord in 1994, the PLO was representing us, I mean they still are but they used to represent all the Palestinians, both inside and out and we who live outside would like these people to stay because this is the body that represents all the Palestinians inside and outside, all of the factions. So it's very important for us for the PLO to stay and because now after the Oslo Accord, it started to lose its role, the PLO and so I believe that it's very important to put back the whole of the PLO, how it used to be. Everything has to be approved by all Palestinians so those Palestinians who live in the diaspora have to be able to say their opinions, to have a say in what is going on.*

Liz: But how practically could this happen now?



Ahmed: *We have a constitution with the PLO, the National Council, but it's been now, because of the current situation they cannot do -*

(His wife interrupts him and they talk in Arabic for a few minutes)

Ahmed: *The National Council, so we have institutions but the problem is that there is no free movement between people inside and outside, but we have institutions, we have all of these, where we can say there.*

Liz: Okay, but about people such as you living in the diaspora?

Maha: *Okay, those people they are free to express themselves in demonstrations, through the foundations that are outside, like the NGOs, for so many people, there are a lot of foundations in Europe working for the helping the families inside; this way – for us this is the only way.*

Liz: This is what I'm trying to get at – are you restricted living here, and you don't have so much say?

Maha: Yes, yes

Ahmed: *The only way for us to say our opinion and be influential, is for us to put an appeal with the NGOs and the institutions before Oslo was formed, you remember in 1988, the last Palestinian Council, where we recognised the right of the Israeli people to exist and that there should be two states; this was the last time the Palestinian Council could meet. After that people could not communicate, but this is the only way they can.*

Liz: So are you talking about the situation there, you're not talking about the PLO worldwide?

Ahmed: *Worldwide, they used to represent all of us.*



Liz: What about the embassy here, is it PLO?

Maha: *Yes*

Ahmed: *Yes*

Liz: It's unclear though, because I'm not sure if it's supposed to be

Ahmed: *Yes, it's unclear, exactly.*

Maha: *Excuse me Elizabeth* (she starts speaking to her husband in Arabic again)

Maha: *Ah, but I tell what, not in a complete picture. All the Palestinian embassies outside, even in Europe and wherever in the world, they can express whatever we want them to express to the world, definitely but because of certain political reasons they won't go out of line in the country that they are in, but inside it's different, but I think in Greece, I think they are free to do whatever, because the Greek people, the Greek government is very supportive.*

Ahmed: *Until we have our own official civil institutions in a democracy, it will be different; now the embassy cannot play this role, we need to have institutions like the Palestinian Council where we can have our own representatives elected.*

Liz: Which can branch out to communities living outside too?

Ahmed: *Yes, yes, because this council, I mean Edward Said was a member, the owner of the Palestinian company I work for also was a member, so all over the world there were members; now it has more than 500 members, I think who used to represent Palestinians all over the world, but I think it was a condition set by the Israelis and the Americans, to make all the Palestinian Authority start to dissolve, to dissolve the PLO.*



Liz: Were they trying to weaken Palestinian unity?

Ahmed: *Yes, and like to reach to a point where the Right of Return was waived, to try to cut the links between those outside and inside, so that to make sure that those people who were living outside stayed outside and would never dream of going back. They can go back to the 1967 areas but not the pre-1948 part; this was the plan from the Israelis and the Americans, I think.*

Liz: So, in light of all this, do you feel that Palestinians are united?

(Pause)

Liz: Starting from here in Greece, at the more local level

Ahmed: *Yes, yes. There are certain issues where no Palestinian can disagree with the other, especially those things like the Right of Return, the issue of settlements, the core issues if you like. I don't think those people who are trying to find a compromise, what I think their role should be is to advance these ideas as a platform for peace, for a treaty between us and the Israelis, to try to, but again its for the Palestinians to decide, not anyone else, but I mean it's a democracy, so everyone can say what they think, like those people who made this Geneva Condition, they are just speaking for themselves; they don't represent all the Palestinians, so okay, I mean we don't mind as long as they are just representing themselves.*

Liz: But do they claim to speak for Palestinian people as a whole?

Ahmed: *I don't think so; the only things that I personally have objection to because the guy who signed, he used to be a Minister in the Palestinian Authority and that's where I think the mistake from the Palestinian side, was made, because I mean when he is Palestinian official, this means that he is backed by the Palestinian authority, so he's not independent but involved; he would talk in a different way if he was not part of them; he doesn't have a*



*forward role or stance, that's where I think the problem is, but it's a democracy. Anyone can say, okay I propose this. Personally I don't mind if he did not come from the Palestinian authority; I would prefer if he didn't but it's a sensitive point. If it came from a university professor or anybody else okay why not, I would accept it.*

Liz: But let's say you strongly disagreed with the proposals being put forward – how would people let their opinion be heard and what channels could you follow?

Ahmed: *Now?*

Liz: Yes, at this moment in time.

Ahmed: *It's different for the Palestinians. Now, with the current situation, I don't think that our opinions would be heard – it's very difficult for us.*

Maha: *Like now, with this Geneva thing, let's say that we don't like it, how do we let our voice reach out, or be heard?*

Liz: If there was something you really disagreed with.

Ahmed: *Now, we cannot*

Liz: So this is why the current situation is also so difficult for you, and so complex.

Maha: *But we depend on the people inside. For me, I depend on them and I am with the old generation like my father. I'm from the people who say that the only people who can decide are the people there. They are the ones who should decide what they want – not anyone else, not anyone outside, whatever the case is.*



Ahmed: *But the population outside is more.*

Maha: *Yes, I know but I mean that the way that they want it to be, the way that - they suffered more than the people outside.*

Ahmed: *But what about those Palestinians in the camps outside?*

Maha: *Ah yes, I know, yes, but I mean how will their voice be heard those who are in the camps, how can their voice be heard, it cannot –*

Ahmed: *Yes, but –*

Maha: *They are depending on the people who are fighting inside, who are resisting, exactly, they know that those people will not let them down, because these people are actively fighting for those refugees to be able to come back.*

Ahmed: *Like you know because we have those factions, the PLO, Hamas or Jihad also the Popular Front, the Democratic Front, Fatah.*

Liz: *Yes, I find it a little confusing, all these different groups and their ideas!*

Maha: *Yes, it is*

Ahmed: *Yes but they all agree on the goals, but the way to reach the goals is different. Fatah, for example, the mainstream one, they believe that we can make peace with the Israelis. Hamas and Jihad, on the other hand believe in an armed struggle, others believe in negotiations, of course on the turning point through the history of Palestine, at some point, they have to reach an agreement, a compromise.*



## 5. Haleef's views on a future Palestinian state

*Arafat went in military uniform and his gun and a branch of an olive tree and he would say I have a branch of an olive tree but I also have my gun. I have not come to fight you and I don't want to fight. These are our rights. You as members of the UN know the resolution in 1967, 1968 which said that the Israelis must leave from our land and they're not leaving. This is what I'm doing. Put pressure on them and recognise my right to have a country too and I won't have any problems. Of course, in order to get there, a lot of work was needed. Before we managed to get to the UN, it wasn't that easy, but you saw what Golda Meir said, that I don't exist. He said I don't know of any Palestinian people – they don't exist in 1966, when the Mayor of Nazareth went to talk to the Knesset. What did you say, they said to him when he asked them for money to create the centre for culture and civilisation in Nazareth so that the culture and traditions of the Palestinians were not forgotten. What, he said – I am not aware of the existence of this group of people called the Palestinians. So, I have to prove that I exist and not just that I exist, but that I am entitled to my own country. This is not an easy thing, Elizabeth. This, to reach this point, it's a race, it's done through sacrifices, with people who have been killed, with women who have become widows, with children who have become orphans, people who were in jail for 20 years, with pressures but at the same time, you always know your goals and your limits. If you say no, I want to achieve more, you know that your own capabilities don't allow this, don't make this possible. It's as if you're committing suicide. In other words, on the one hand you have to be objective and realistic, but on the other hand, at the same time, you have to know that this realism should become detached from your own principles and the starting points from where you began your struggle in order to succeed and to leave opportunities for future generations, for our children...I can't make my child commit or tie him down or somebody else's child from Nazareth, from Haifa, Jaffa, Tel Aviv to a solution now, that we've sorted it out and that you can forget that you had a house in Tel Aviv. I can't tell them this Elizabeth. I don't have the right. I have to make sure that future generations of children have the opportunity and have the right in the future when conditions may be different or*



*the situation will change to say to the Israelis, gentlemen you were strong then, you took our houses, you made us sign a paper that said that this is the Palestinian land that we are entitled to, to say no this is not acceptable. Just like you and in the same ways, using violence and dominance, that you took it from me, I will take it from you. I don't have the right to sign on behalf of the refugees who live today in the refugee camps of Lebanon inside a house the size of this room, to people who have been waiting 50 years for this issue to be resolved. I can't say to them forget about it, forget about going back. We have to be patient. I'm going to sign to create the sort of state they are suggesting now, to put my mind at rest, so that this situation can end? No, because it's not fair for them. The Jews are still asking for money from the Germans, to this day and the Germans will continue to pay for the slaughter that Hitler was responsible for. I want to say that the issue is not Hamas or Jihad believe me. If the people, everyday people are to be convinced that this suggestion of the road map is really a solution, there will be no-one who can say no. You can be sure of that. And if Hamas were to say anything, they would lose support. People are interested in living better lives. People want to go and work in Israel; they want to re-build their factories that have been destroyed. I don't know if you saw yesterday the destruction the Israelis left behind. They left nothing standing. A factory that makes paper, plastic cups, plastic plates got destroyed. Now this, what does it have to do with the situation? When you go into an area and you destroy everything, what do you expect from the people who are affected? Do you expect them to say well done, thank you? You can't behave in such a way in this day and age and at the same time, ask for peace. You have to then really work hard at convincing these people that you seriously want peace after you do thongs like that. It's actions, not words, that count. If people are not convinced – the only judges, the ones who are able to say ok are the people. It may not happen that they say it as a whole, through a vote, but the message, what they feel, shows. When my brother can't go 1500m to his fields to collect his peaches in order to make jam to distribute to his neighbours, what can you say to him? And this is not an isolated case. It is not even 2 people. We're talking about many people here. And the Israelis say, and you hit us too, with bombs. Yes, but I would say to them: you are living, you have a state system, companies,*



*infrastructure, police, a whole system in place. You have everything. You have planes that drop missiles; you have tanks that shoot bullets whenever they want. You have an army, which goes and demolishes whole houses. I can't say no to any of this. To what shall I say no? To what? With what? And I am always the one who's called the terrorist. So Sharon, who kills 15 people somewhere when he's just looking to kill one person and at the same time, 15 get killed, is not a terrorist? No European, since they live in Europe, when it is announced that the Israelis have killed Palestinians, even Tony Blair condemned it, 3 weeks ago I don't know if you remember, they killed all those Hamas members and he said it doesn't help the peace process. Is this all you have to say? With this rocket that the Israelis used, another 7 innocent people were killed. Did you say anything about terrorism then? You said I condemn this action, but did you say why you did? When, the next day, Hamas responded to these killings and killed 16 people, all of them said, these terrorist organisations, which has to be – now my friend why? What do you think I am? Do I have to listen and obey everything you tell me? Sharon, who kills – why don't you call him a terrorist?*

#### **6. Sa'id's discussion on the acquisition of citizenship**

Liz: I suppose some of them [Palestinians in Athens] have got citizenship issues and they can't go back.

Sa'id: *Yes, they can't go back, the Israeli government wants to prosecute them; it's really hard. They come here and let's say they make 1000 euros a month; I'm going to send 200 to my family. In Palestine, 200 euros is a lot of money, so they stay. Eventually, he's going to go back and get married.*

Liz: I have the impression that recently most Palestinians who come do so as students, not economic migrants.

Sa'id: *Yes, because how are economic migrants going to get here? The only way to get here is through Turkey, and come illegally and Palestinians don't do*



*this. In the whole of Greece, you'll only find about 20 or 30 who have come in this way.*

Liz: So they can't apply for work permits?

*Sa'id: No, it's not allowed. If a company here sends you a paper saying that you have a job with them, then you can get a work visa to come and work here but this doesn't happen because they don't take people from Palestine any more. The education there, it's not good any more and they study there and they find a job and send money to their families because they say if I go back, I won't get anything. If I stay here and work, I can send money to my family but eventually they're going to go back.*

Liz: So most go back?

*Sa'id: Yes. People who applied as political refugees in Germany or wherever, they do this so that they can go back. They come here, they see that they're not going to make it, they find a way, they go to Sweden, and they apply to be a political refugee there.*

Liz: And how does that help them go back?

*Sa'id: The Israeli government cannot stop them if they have a European passport. They get political asylum so that they can go back.*

Liz: So they can get the citizenship of the country.

*Sa'id: Yes, in Germany it's 5 years, that's why they go there, here it's 5 years I think. Spain, nobody goes there because it's 10 years. In Canada, it's 3 years but nobody can get to Canada, it's really difficult. So, they go to these countries, they say they're going to stay 3 years. If they have problems with the Israeli government, prosecution or anything, they know that when they leave that they*



*cannot go back to see their family with the Palestinian passport they have. So then they ask for asylum and as soon as they get the citizenship they go back.*

Liz: So the same thing happens here I suppose – the get Greek citizenship and go back.

Sa'id: *If they have Greek citizenship, not many do. It takes 10 years and it's really hard. By the time you apply and get it, Palestine will be returned.*

## **7. Mahmud's personal strategies of resistance**

*The department I work for is with artificial kidneys, which is something that I'll have to see what the situation is like there; here, everyone is after their own best interest aren't they? Even though I would really love to go back and give something to my country. I came here on a scholarship, my country sent me here on a scholarship so I came as a result of my government, so sometimes I think that even if I stay here, I want to do something to help. I have already talked to the representative of the company that I work for about opening a department there and seeing what we can do from here to help. Such departments are rarely found on Palestinian soil – such departments simply don't exist and they are forced to go to Israel and with dialysis you have to go every day for treatment and stay four hours and before you get the permit to be allowed to go you may have died, so that's why – we'll see what happens. I spoke personally to the head of the company and there is definitely the possibility that we might do something. It's just that I don't know exactly what we will be able to do and how exactly we will contribute but we will see. There are moments when you see the situation getting worse there, you leave your work and things and university and you sit and concentrate on that. Last year, with the problems in Bethlehem, when they went into the Church of the Nativity and with Arafat, I don't know if you know about what happened here, when there we sat and stayed outside the Israeli embassy?*



Liz: Yes

Mahmud: *This stage, or demonstration that we set up, as students and some of us had nothing to do with politics or with the Union, like me, until last year, I had nothing to do with the Union. Before, when they used to call me to come to meetings to talk about things and the situation, I used to avoid going – if I had anything else to do I would rather go there. It didn't mean that I didn't feel anything for my country, it's just that from the moment that these scandals happened, we left everything and we sat outside the Israeli embassy for 24 hours in the cold and the most important thing is that we didn't stop thinking that we were going through nothing compared to what the people there were going through and then I have to say then you feel tortured and you fight with yourself, look I am here and I'm okay, I have a job and I'm lucky and I'm having a good time with my friends and there are others who are there getting killed for our sakes, so that we can create a country. And you think, what am I sitting here and doing? It's at such moments when you want to quit everything and go back, so you have to remind yourself and calm down and that you have to stay here and get your degree and then I'll be able to help in another way.*

Liz: Yes, so do you feel that you're helping at all being here?

Mahmud: *I try, I try to do whatever I can to help but despite all that I am only doing 1% of what I could be doing – you can always do and contribute more. For example, if you give an interview, or go on television, whatever, these things are good and right and we have to do them because you give the right information about Palestine to people but a person who is there like my fellow students there, picks up rocks, weapons, whatever he can and he goes and he fights. I when I go on television or when I go to a demonstration or whatever, nothing happens to me, and there again you become very affected and you start thinking about things and about what you're doing here. You feel that you don't belong here. So there is always this battle going on inside you. It's just that everyday life and stuff, you have to focus on that and get on with it. You see the situation there and I don't want to ask for money from my parents so I have to*



*work so I have to make it on my own, so I have to make sure I have enough money to pay for all my bills and then you have to get all your permits, finish university, all these things force you to get on with things and for seconds sometimes you forget the situation there.*

## **8. Ibrahim's views on advocacy**

Liz: Is there is a big difference between the rich and poor in Palestinian society would you say – I mean do the poor resent those who are wealthy?

Ibrahim: *Yes and of course those who do have money look out only for themselves.*

Liz: They don't care about others who are poorer?

Ibrahim: *They care but only to the extent that it doesn't harm their own finances.*

Liz: So do you living here feel as if you are helping the situation there at all?

Ibrahim: *Look, everyone has a role to play. He may contribute with money and get involved in that way, or to bring up his son to be Palestinian. This is something a person can do; each does whatever he can or wants to do. Okay, we, my wife and I, my wife, she gives her time to the Arabs, the migrants here generally, not just the Palestinians. She goes and teaches Arabic at a school, at a primary school, the second class of primary school as a volunteer. So she's doing something for Palestine at least.*

Liz: So do you think that there are many opportunities for people to do something if they want to?

Ibrahim: *Socially, yes of course. With money, you can send money to specific families who need help there.*



Liz: What about festivals, things like that?

Ibrahim: *Yes, okay, but they don't do that much to help except educating people about the problem that exists. Politically, the political power in any country these days is out of reach of the ordinary person; they are not listened to or feel empowered in all countries, Greece and England too. Look what happened with Tony Blair. He did what he wanted with Iraq. The politicians are isolated from the people. There is no such thing as a democracy these days because when you vote someone into Parliament and you trust him to voice your concerns and problems and he voices his own concerns and looks after his own interests not yours, then you don't have a democracy, do you? So there is a big difference between those in power and everyday people. So those in power don't offer anything really to people; they just give them bits of information but those in power just do whatever they want.*

Liz: But there are marches, demonstrations, things like that.

Ibrahim: *Yes, but what good do they do? Do you see them doing any good?*

Liz: Perhaps people feel that they are doing something or they feel empowered in some way.

Ibrahim: *Okay, perhaps they may have some influence in the future. So a leader who comes into power will know perhaps that he will not have the support of certain groups of people who have demonstrated their opinions. But there's not that many and they don't do that much because things are so controlled, you know what I mean. It's like the Karayiozi<sup>2</sup> – it's all a show, we are puppets of the state. So I don't really believe that much in demonstrations although I have taken part in a few that have led to the Israeli embassy but it doesn't do anything. The struggle, for me is when you give 50 euros to a struggling family in Palestine so that they can live for 10 days and resist for longer – this is true*

---

<sup>2</sup> Karayiozi is a puppet character in a popular Greek satirical puppet theatre of the same name.



*support. This actually helps people – because there is a lack of food, medicine. Just saying I'm on your side, that doesn't do anything. Okay his heart is in the right place. But what good is saying that I am with you when the other person's starving?*

Liz: Therefore, the financial role of Palestinians living abroad is very important?

Ibrahim: *Yes, it's very important. I mean those who are outside cannot do more than that. We cannot do more here. If we did we would have problems in all senses of the word. Here, where we live, we have to obey the law; we can't do whatever we want.*

Liz: But surely it's also important for Greeks, people in Europe generally to understand what's really going on there?

Ibrahim: *But it's not many people who take part or who get involved here in Greece politically. Here it's mainly KKE<sup>3</sup> who listen to us and are involved with the Palestinian cause but outside of this political sphere you will not find many people getting involved or advocating our cause. In order for people to support us politically or to get involved they have to be from that political sphere. Ordinary people on their own would not; they would not do anything. So there is just political support. The people who come on the marches are only those from KKE and Synasprismos<sup>4</sup>, and other left wing parties so there is no mainstream support or involvement. This means that the others don't want to or not that they don't want to but it needs political will and someone on top of you organising things, telling you to go and you need to be part of a political organisation that tells you to take part and support or not. Other people are all talk; they don't do anything.*

---

<sup>3</sup> KKE is the communist party of Greece.

<sup>4</sup> Synasprismos is a small left wing political party.



## 9. Haleef's memories of the role the GUPS played in abolishing tuition fees for Palestinian students

Liz: How easy is it for Palestinians to get involved in political activities such as demonstrations or Unions?

Haleef: *Now to give you an image I've been here since 1973. I came here and I didn't know Greek, I came to study. When we created the Union of Students, a law was passed in 1976 that foreign students in Greece have to pay tuition fees. Then, Rallis was the Minister for Childhood. Yiorgos Rallis was prime Minister in 1981 when elections were held and Yiorgos Papandreou got elected. He was the last Prime Minister before PASOK got into power. Then he created his own party and so on and so on. He's an old man now; he's eighty something. He was in Nea Dimokratia<sup>5</sup> of course; he was conservative and so on. We, as a Union of Students – there was no Embassy then, no diplomatic representation, no information office. There was absolutely nothing. We were students and we made a committee. It was me, a person who is now a dentist and a doctor at Aghio Savva (a hospital) and another student who has left Greece. There were four of us and we asked to meet the Prime Minister. We waited a month and then we went into his office of Mr Ralli in 1976, in March, after the carnival, I remember. And we went in and he said, my child, what is your name and what are you studying and we started chatting about Palestine. When we spoke Greek to him and we each told him what we were studying and we told him that we had problems and that we couldn't afford to pay the tuition fees. We explained that we didn't have universities in our country and that was why we were here trying to study and the money that we are sent is for us to live on, you have to appreciate that, we told him, its a very situation for us. And we explained to him that we would be Ambassadors of Greece wherever we went and back in our homeland and we asked him – he listened to us speak one by one and he told us: I, when I see Arabs, Palestinians speaking the Greek language, as you do, when they are studying and under the difficulties they are experiencing and the stress*

---

<sup>5</sup> The main right-wing political party in Greece.



*they have to go through and they the fact that they have learnt Greek – it is my debt to help you. I am obligated to; I'm not doing you a favour. And I will not change things with a Prime Ministers decision. I will pass it, as a law in Parliament and this was Nea Dimokratia in 1976. It is the law in Greece since 1976 that Palestinians don't have to pay fees. We weren't officials; we were just a Students' Union and the man was conservative. He wasn't PASOK.*

#### **10. Abir's description of advocacy she is involved in**

*Abir: I went to the big demonstration against the war in Iraq and to some smaller ones too. Once we went all the women, all dressed in black to the UN representative here near Syntagma, on Mothers Day. There were women from Greece, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, other places too and we were all campaigning for human rights. Anyway, we submitted a letter to Kofi Annan and the European Parliament and we held up pictures and posters.*

*Liz: When was this?*

*Abir: Two years ago. At the beginning of the second Intifada in 2001, everyone was furious and everyone wanted to do something, to tell everyone, but some people prefer not to get involved. Some people still have connections with the West Bank and they are scared in case it stops them from going, but I don't care and I don't need to go there, so I'm much more free to do and say what I like, which I do. Two and a half years ago, we had a big bazaar. We had food; we collected money for hospitals in Jerusalem and recited Palestinian poetry. It was organised then. Now, efforts are more on an individual and informal basis. Two years ago, I was also involved in making a book on Palestinian issues and history and I arranged a course for Palestinian children who didn't know about the cause. There is a lot of ignorance about the issues even amongst Palestinians and especially children who go to international schools. They felt ashamed that they didn't know very much, so I decided to do this because I am an Arabic teacher and I have experience teaching children. I had to find references for this course and I found that a lot of books stop at 1948 or 1967.*



*They are more historical than contemporary, so this was when I met with Ahmed. We found this old book that was very brief and that was written 30 years ago and we updated it and continued with the history, because we felt that a book was needed to show what has happened more recently too in a concise and clear way. This course – 18 children came to it. I was very pleased with it and so were they. We made a lot of discussions, I made them investigate things, find things out on their own and I think it was very effective. The thing is you can't depend on the Greek media to give you information. You won't get the whole story. They are obsessed with celebrities.*

Liz: Do you think enough is being done here to help the Palestinian cause?

*Abir: No more should be done. We should try to get in contact with the Greek women's organisations. I know the Athens Centre for Women. It is a feminist centre. They called me to give a lecture on the women in Palestine and Apartheid wall before Christmas, in December, which I was very happy to do.*

Liz: Do you feel helpless at all?

*Abir: No, I don't. I do things to help. I am active, but others do not do so much. They are not used to travelling great distances and they stick to the areas they know and the circles they have so it's difficult to get them to do things and go places. My children are grown up now, so I have more time to get involved and do things...I have also taught a course, which was an Arabic language course, I didn't target these children, only the one who don't speak Arabic and who go to International schools here and who will go to the UK or America to study. The problem with the Parikia and with Palestinians here is that we don't have contacts with Greeks. We need to increase them because it's a shame as there is a lot more we could do. I went to a school in Holargos (a suburb of Athens) once and I talked about being Palestinian, which was really good and it was very well received by the children.*



## Bibliography

### Websites

[www.al-awda.org](http://www.al-awda.org): website of the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, a “broad based, non-partisan, democratic and charitable organisation of grassroots activists and students”, campaigning for the right of return of all Palestinian refugees to their “homes and lands of origin”.

[www.badil.org](http://www.badil.org): website of the Resource centre for Palestinian residency and refugees rights, which is registered with the Palestinian Authority. It was established to “support the development of a popular refugee lobby for the right of return through professional research and partnership-based community initiatives”. It provides information, such as documents, statistics and publications, on Palestinian refugees and their right of return.

[www.4data.ca/palestine/palestine.html](http://www.4data.ca/palestine/palestine.html): small Canadian-based website describing and advocating Palestinian history and ‘identity’ mainly through the use of images.

[www.hejleh.com/countries/palestine.html](http://www.hejleh.com/countries/palestine.html): comprehensive website, providing links to the homepages of Palestinian families, companies, cultural resources, media, government, educational and non-governmental organisations as well as an outline of Palestinian history and geography. It advocates peace but not using “this peace process” which it argues is in favour of Israelis, not Palestinians.

[www.palestinecenter.org](http://www.palestinecenter.org): website of The Palestine Centre, an “educational program of The Jerusalem Fund. It is dedicated to analysis of the relationships between the United States and Middle East with particular emphasis on Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflicts. The Palestine Center...provides a much-needed Palestinian/Arab perspective to the political, academic and media establishments in Washington, DC and throughout the United States”.



[www.palestine-net.com](http://www.palestine-net.com): comprehensive website advocating the Palestinian cause, which provides information on Palestinian history, geography, culture, economy, life and politics and includes links with other Palestinian websites and resources.

[www.palestineremembered.com](http://www.palestineremembered.com): website dedicated to the remembering of the Nakba, emphasising, as it does in its mission statement that “core issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are dispossession and ethnic cleansing...of the Palestinian people for the past five decades. It forms a medium where Palestinian refugees can communicate, organise and share experiences” and it preserves memories and provides information on Palestinian areas that were “destroyed by the Israeli army” in order to “raise refugees’ awareness of the right of return”.

[www.passia.org](http://www.passia.org): the website of the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, an Arab, non-profit institution which “seeks to present the Palestinian Question in its national, Arab and international contexts through academic research, dialogue and publications”.

[www.palestinercs.org](http://www.palestinercs.org): the website of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS). The Palestinian National Council mandated the PRCS, which is a humanitarian society responsible for the provision of “a wide range of health, social and other humanitarian services for the Palestinian people throughout the Middle East”. Its website provides statistics and information on Palestinian-related health and social issues in particular.

### **Literature, journals and newspapers**

Al-Ali, N and Koser, K. (2002) New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home, London: Routledge.

Al-Ali, N. (2002) “Trans- or a-nation?: Bosnian refugees in the UK and the Netherlands, in N. Al-Ali and K. Koser (eds) New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home, London: Routledge, 96-117.



Al-Ali, N, Black, R and Koser, K. (2001) "The Limits to 'Transnationalism': Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities", Ethnic and Racial Studies 24 (4) 578-600.

Allan, S. and Thompson, A. (1999) "The Time-Space of National Memory", in K. J. Brehony and N. Rassool (eds.) Nationalisms Old and New, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 35-50.

Alleyne, B. (2002) "An Idea of Community and its Discontents: Towards a More Reflexive Sense of Belonging in Multicultural Britain", Ethnic and Racial Studies 25 (4) 607-627.

Alund, A. (1999) "Feminism, Multiculturalism, Essentialism", in N. Yuval-Davis and P. Werbner (eds) Women, Citizenship and Difference, London: Zed Books, 147-161.

Amin, A. (2004) "Regions Unbound: Towards a New Politics of Place, Geogr. Ann. 86 b (1) 33-44.

Amitsas, G. and Lazaridis, G. (eds. 2001) Legal and Socio-political Dimensions of Migration in Greece, Athens: Papazisis (in Greek).

Anderson, B. (1983) Imagined Communities, London: Verso.

Anderson, B. (1993) "The New World Disorder", New Left Review (193) 3-14.

Ang, I. and Symonds, M. (1997) "Home, Displacement and Belonging: An Introduction", Communal/Plural (5) iv-vii, available online at:  
[www.uws.edu.au/research/researchcentres/ccr/ccrdownloads](http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchcentres/ccr/ccrdownloads)

Anthias, F. (2001) "New Hybridities, Old Concepts: the Limits of 'Culture'", Ethnic and Racial Studies 24 (4) 619-641.



Anzaldúa, G. (1999) Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Appadurai, A. (1990) "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Political Economy", Public Culture 2 (2) 1-24.

Armbruster, H. (2002) "Homes in crisis: Syrian Orthodox Christians in Turkey and Germany", in N. Al-Ali and K. Koser (Eds) New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home 17-34.

Armstrong, W. (1998) "Belonging, Ethnic Diversity and Everyday experience: Co-existing Identities on the Italo-Slovene Frontier", Transnational Communities Research Working Paper WPTC-98-05.

Ashcroft, B. and Ahluwalia, P. (1999) Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity, London and New York: Routledge.

Ashcroft, B. Griffiths, G and Tiffin, H. (1995) "Introduction to Universality and Difference", in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (eds,) The Post - Colonial Reader, London: Routledge.

Athanasiadis, I (2002) "Palestinian Tragedy with a Greek Ending", in Al Ahram Weekly, 13-19 June, 590, available online at:  
<http://webl.ahram.org.eg/weekly/2002/590/re4.htm>.

Athens-Palestine 2002, booklet to accompany festival on Palestinian Film, Poetry and Dancing, 7-12 June.

Bailey, AJ, Wright, RA, Mountz, A. and Miyares, I (2002) "(Re)producing Salvadoran Transnational Geographies", Annals of the Association of American Geographers 92 (1) 125-144.



Banks, M. (1998) "Visual Anthropology: Image, Object and Interpretation" in J. Prosser (ed) Image-Based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers, Bristol: Falmer Press, 9-23.

Barghouti, M. (2004) I Saw Ramallah, London: Bloomsbury.

Basch, L, Glick Schiller, N and Szanton-Blanc, C. (1994) Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialised Nation-States, Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach.

Baxter, J. and Eyles, J. (1997) "Evaluating Qualitative Research in Social Geography: Establishing 'Rigour' in Interview Analysis", Trans Inst Br Geogr (22) 505-525.

Beck, U. (1992) The Risk Society, London: Sage.

Benhabib, S. (2004) The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Besio, K. (2003) "Steppin' in it: Postcoloniality in Northern Pakistan", Area 35 (1) 24-34.

Bhabha, H. (1994) The Location of Culture, London: Routledge.

Bishara, M. (2002) Palestine-Israel: Peace or Apartheid, Athens: Lagouthera

Black, R. (1992) "Livelihood and Vulnerability of Foreign Refugees in Greece", Occasional Paper No. 33, Department of Geography, King's College, The University of London.

Blunt, A. (2005) Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home, London: Blackwell.



Blunt, A. (1999) "Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886-1925", Trans. Inst. Br. Geogr. (24) 421-440.

Blunt, A. and McEwan, C. (2002) "Introduction", in A. Blunt and C. McEwan (eds.) Postcolonial Geographies, London: Continuum, 1-9.

Blunt, A. and Rose, G. (1994) Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies, London: The Guildford Press.

Bowman, G. (2003) "Constitutive Violence and the National Imaginary. Antagonism and Defensive Solidarity in 'Palestine' and 'Former Yugoslavia'", Social Anthropology, 11 (3) 319-340.

Bowman, G. (1993) "Tales of the Lost Land: Palestinian Identity and the Formation of National Consciousness", in E. Carter, J. Donald and J. Squires (eds) Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location, 73-99.

Brah, A. (1996) Cartographies of Diaspora, London: Routledge.

Brydon, D. (1995) "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy", in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (eds,) The Post - Colonial Reader, London: Routledge, 136-143.

Buijs, G. (ed.1993) Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities, Oxford and Providence: Berg.

Caglar, AS (1997) "Hyphenated Identities and the Limits of 'Culture'", in Modood, T and Werbner, P. (eds.) The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community, London and NY: Zed Books, 169-185.

Carter, S. (2005) "The Geopolitics of Diaspora", Area 37 (1) 54-63.



- Castells, M. (1996) The Rise of the Network Society, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castles, S. and Davidson, A. (2000) Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the Politics of Belonging, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Cavounidis, J. (2002) "Migration in Southern Europe and the Case of Greece", in International Migration 40 (1) 45-68.
- Clifford, J. (1997) Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, J. and Marcus, G (eds. 1986) Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Close, D. (2002) Greece since 1945: Politics, Economy, Society, London: Longman.
- Cobban, H. (1984) The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, R. (1995) "Diasporas and the Nation-State: From Victims to Challengers", International Affairs (72) 507-520.
- Cohen, R. (1999) "The Making of Ethnicity: A Modest Defence of Primordialism" in E. Mortimer with R. Fine (eds.) People, Nation and State, London: IB Taurus, 3-11.
- Cohen, R. (1997) Global Diasporas, London: UCL Press.
- Cook, I. and Crang, M. (1995) Doing Ethnographies, Concepts and Techniques in Modern Geography 58, Norwich: Environmental Publications.



Cook, I. and Harrision, M. (2003) "Cross Over Food: Re-Materializing Postcolonial Geographies", Trans Inst Br Geogr. 28 (3) 296-317.

Crang, M. (2002) "Qualitative Methods: The New Orthodoxy?" Progress in Human Geography 26 (5) 647-655.

Crang, M. (1997) "Picturing Practices: Research Through the Tourist Gaze", Progress in Human Geography 21 (3) 359-373.

Crang, P. (1992) "The Politics of Polyphony: Reconfigurations in Geographical Authority", Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (10) 527-549.

Croucher, S. L. (2004) Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Crush, J. (1994) "Post-colonialism, De-colonization and Geography", in A. Godlweska and N. Smith (eds.) Geography and Empire, Oxford: Blackwell.

Danese, G. "Transnational Collective Action in Europe: the Case of Migrants in Italy and Spain", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 24 (4) 715-733.

Davidson, J. and Bondi, L. (2004) "Spatialising Affect; Affecting Space: an Introduction", Gender, Space and Culture 11 (3) 373-374.

Davis, U. (1997) Citizenship and the State: A Comparative Study of Citizenship Legislation in Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, Reading: Ithaca Press.

Delanty, G. (2003) Community, London: Routledge.

Dicken, P, Kelly, PF, Olds, K and Yeung, WC. (2001) "Chains and Networks, Territories and Scales: Towards a Relational Framework for Analysing the Global economy", Global Networks 1 (2) 89-112.



Dorai, M.K. (2002) "The meaning of Homeland for the Palestinian Diaspora: Revival and Transformation", in N. Al Ali and K. Koser (eds.) New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home, 87-95.

Duncan, N. and Sharp, J.P. (1993) "Confronting Representation(s)", Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (11) 473-486.

Dwyer, C. (2002) "Where are You From? Young British South Asian Women and the making of Home", in A. Blunt and C. McEwan (eds.) Postcolonial Geographies, London: Continuum, 184-200.

Dwyer, C. (1999) "Contradictions of Community: Questions of Identity for Young British Muslim Women", Environment and Planning A (31) 53-68.

Edwards, E. (1992) Anthropology and Photography, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

EKA (1997) Racism and Xenophobia: Initiatives for the Legalisation of Foreign Workers, Athens (in Greek).

Elden, S. (2005) "Missing the Point: Globalization, Deterritorialization and the Space of the World", Trans. Inst. Br. Geogr. 30 (1) 8-20.

Ellis, C. and Bochner, A. (eds. 1996) Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing, Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

EU Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs (2001) "Country Profile: Greece", available online at:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice\\_home/unit\\_asile\\_immigrat/greece\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/unit_asile_immigrat/greece_final_en.pdf)



Fakiolas, R. (2000) "Migration and Unregistered Labour in the Greek Economy", in R. King, C. Tsardanides and G. Lazaridis (eds.) El Dorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 57-79.

Fakiolas, R. (1999) "Greece", in S. Angendedt (ed.) Asylum and Migration Policies in the EU, Berlin: Research Institute of the German Society for Foreign Affairs.

Farah, R. (2003) "The Protection Gap: UNRWA, UNCCP, UNHCR", Paper presented as part of a Refugee Studies Centre Workshop on Palestinian Refugees and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10-11 May.

Faist, T. (2000) "Transnationalization in International Migration: Implications for the Study of Citizenship and Culture", Ethnic and Racial Studies (23) 189-222.

Falah, G. and Nagel, C. (2005) Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion and Space, London: The Guildford Press.

Faulks, K. (2000) Citizenship, London: Routledge.

Featherstone, D. (2003) "Spatialities of Transnational Resistance to Globalization: the Maps of Grievance of the Inter-Continental Caravan", Trans Inst Br Geogr. 28 (4) 404-422.

Fine, R. (1999) "Benign Nationalism? The Limits of the Civic Ideal" in E. Mortimer with R. Fine (eds.) People, Nation and State, London: IB Taurus, 149-161.

Frangi, A. (1983) The PLO and Palestine, London: Zed Books.

Freeman, A. (2005) "Moral Geographies and Women's Freedom: Rethinking Freedom Discourse in the Moroccan Context", in G. Falah and C. Nagel (eds.)



Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion and Space, London: The Guildford Press, 147-178.

Galati, P. (2002) "Helping Immigrants to adapt to Greece", in I Kathimerini (English edition) December, available online at:  
<http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/news/content.asp?aid=24022>.

Ghani, D. A. (2000) "The Palestinian Community in Sweden", Paper given at a conference on Palestinian Refugee Communities in Europe, St Anthony's College, Oxford, in association with the Refugee Studies Centre, Shaml (The Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre), May.

GHM (Greek Helsinki Monitor) 2002 "Anti-Semitism in Greece: A Current Picture: 2001-2002", Report prepared in association with the Minority Rights Group, Athens, Greece.

Giddens, A. (1990) The Consequences of Modernity, Polity: Cambridge.

Gilroy, P. (1999) "It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at: The Dialectics of Diasporic Identification", in S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (Eds.) Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism, Cheltenham: Elgar, 280-292.

Gilroy, P. (2000) Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race, London: Allen lane, Penguin.

Glick-Schiller, N, Basch, L and Blanc-Szanton, C. (1999) "Transnationalism: A new Framework for Understanding Migration", in S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (eds.) Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism, Cheltenham: Elgar, 299-314.

Glick Schiller, N. and Fouron, G. (2001) Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home, Durham and London: Duke University Press.



Goldring, L. (1999) "Power and Status in Transnational Social Spaces", in L. Pries (ed) Migration and Transnational Social Spaces, Aldershot: Ashgate, 162-187.

Guarnizo, LE and Smith, MP. (1998) "The Locations of Transnationalism", in Smith, MP and Guarnizo, LE (eds.) Transnationalism from Below, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Guibernau, M. (2001) "Globalisation and the Nation-State", in M. Guibernau and J. Hutchinson (eds.) Understanding Nationalism, Cambridge: Polity Press, 242-268.

GUPS (Thessaloniki branch) Palestinian Poetry (in Greek).

Gupta, A and Ferguson, J. (eds. 1997) Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology, Durham and London: Duke University Press

Gupta, A. (1997) "Song of the Nonaligned World", in Gupta, A and Ferguson, J. (eds.) Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology, Durham and London: Duke University Press. 179-199.

Gupta, A. (1995) "Blurred Boundaries: the Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics and the Imagined State", American Ethnologist 22 (2) 375-402.

Halazios, H. (2003) Palestine: It's Not Just Land, Athens.

Hall, S. (1999) "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (eds.) Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism, Cheltenham: Elgar, 299-314.

Hanafi, S. (2005) "Reshaping Geography: Palestinian Community Networks in Europe and the New Media", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 31 (3) 581-598.



Hannerz, U. (1980) Exploring the City: Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology, New York: Columbia University Press.

Hannerz, U. (1996) Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places, London: Routledge.

Haraway, D. (1988) "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism as a Site of Discourse on the Privilege of Partial Perspective", Feminist Studies (14) 575-599.

Harvey, D. (1990) The Condition of Postmodernity, Oxford: Blackwell.

hooks, b. (1990) "Choosing the Margin as a Space for Radical Openness", in b. hooks, Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics, Boston: South End Press, 145-153.

Hobshawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds. 1983) The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hourani, A. (1991) A History of the Arab Peoples, London: Faber and Faber

Howitt, R. (2002) "Nests, Webs and Constructs: Contested Concepts of Scale in Political Geography", in J. Agnew, K. Mitchell and G. O Tuathail (eds.) A Companion to Political Geography, Oxford: Blackwell.

Hyndman, J. (1997) "Border Crossings" Antipode 29 (2) 149-176.

Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power (2004) Special Issue on Movement on the Margins: Mobility and Enclosures at Borders.

Iordanidis, C. (2000) "'Brother Arafat'", in I Kathimerini (English Edition), available online at: <http://www.ekathimerini.com>.



Iosifides, T. (1997) "Immigrants in the Athens Labour Market: A Comparative Survey of Albanians, Egyptians and Filipinos", in R. King and R. Black (eds.) Southern Europe and the New Immigrations, Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 22-50.

Isin, E. F (2002) Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Isin, E. F and Wood, PK (1999) Citizenship and Identity, London: Sage.

Itzigsohn, J. (2000) "Immigration and the Boundaries of Citizenship: The Institutions of Immigrants' Political Transnationalism", International Migration Review 34 (4) 1126-1154.

Jacobs, J. (1996) Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City, London: Routledge.

James, A, Hockey, J. and Dawson, A. (eds. 1997) After Writing Culture: Epistemology and Praxis in Contemporary Anthropology, London: Routledge.

Jarvis, Y. (2004) Speech given at conference on 'Immigrants as Workers or as Human Beings?', Zappeion Hall, Athens, 3 February.

Johnson, P. and Kuttat, E. (2001) "Where Have All The Women (And Men) Gone? Reflections on Gender and the Second Intifada", Feminist Review 69 (1) 21-43

Joseph, M. (1999) Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship, Public Worlds Vol. 5, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press

Kahani-Hopkins, V and Hopkins, N. (2002) "'Representing' British Muslims: The Strategic Dimension to Identity Construction", Ethnic and Racial Studies 25 (2) 288-309.



Karmi, G. (2002) In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story, London: Verso

Karmi, G. (1999) "After the Nakba: An Experience of Exile in England", Journal of Palestine Studies (28) 3, available online at:

<http://www.ipsjps.org/jps/111/karmi.html>.

Karmi, G and Cotran. E. (1999) The Palestinian Exodus: 1948-1998, Reading: Ithaca Press.

Kastoryano, R. (1998) "Transnational Participation and Citizenship: Immigrants in the EU", ESRC Transnational Communities Research Programme Working Paper WPTC-98-12.

Katz, C. (1994) "Playing the Field: Questions of Fieldwork in Geography", in Professional Geographer 46 (1) 67-72.

Katz, C. (1992) "All the World is Staged: Intellectuals and the Projects of Ethnography" Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (10) 495-510.

Kearney, M. (1999) "The Local and the Global: The Anthropology of Globalisation and Transnationalism, in S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (eds.) Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism, Cheltenham: Elgar, 520-538.

Keck, ME and Sikkink, K. (1999) "Transnational Advocacy Networks in International and Regional Politics", International Social Science Journal 51 (159) 89-101.

Kempey, M. (2002) Cieszyn Silesia: A Transnational Community under Reconstruction, in P. Kennedy and V. Roudometof (eds) Communities across Borders: New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures, London: Routledge, 116-127.



Kennedy, P and Roudometof, V. (2001) "Communities Across Borders under Globalising Conditions: New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures", ESRC Transnational Communities Research Working Paper WPTC-01-17.

Khalidi, R. (1997) Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness, New York: Columbia University Press

King, R. (2000) "Southern Europe in the Changing Global Map of Migration", in R. King, C. Tsardanides and G. Lazaridis (eds.) El Dorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1-26.

King, R. Iosifidis, T. and Myavili, L. (1998) "A Migrant's Story: From Albania to Athens", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 24 (4) 715-733.

Kitchin, R. and Tate, N. J. (2000) Conducting Research in Human Geography: Theory, Methodology and Practice, Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Kivisto, P. (2001) "Theorizing Transnational Immigration: A Critical Review of Current Efforts", Ethnic and Racial Studies 24 (4) 549-577.

Kofman, E. (1995) "Citizenship for Some but not for Others: Spaces of Citizenship in Contemporary Europe", Political Geography (14) 121-137.

Kondoyannis, S. (2001) "Palestine – Sharon is a Terrorist", (in Greek) Socialism From Below (41) available online at <http://users.otenet.gr/~sek/sak41b.html>

Labelle, M and Midy, F (1999) "Re-Reading Citizenship and the Transnational Practices of Immigrants", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 25 (2) 213-232.



Lambert, D. (2005) “‘As Solid as a Rock’? Place, Belonging and the Local Appropriation of Imperial Discourse in Gibraltar”, Trans Inst Br Geogr. 30 (2) 206-221.

Laurie, N., Dwyer, C., Holloway, S. and Smith, F. (1999) Geographies of New Femininities, Harlow: Longman.

Lavie, S. and Swedenberg, T. (1996) “Introduction: Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity, in S. Lavie and T. Swedenberg (eds) Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1-15.

Lawson, V.A. (2000) “Arguments within Geographies of Movement: The Theoretical Potential of Migrants’ Stories”, Progress in Human Geography 24 (2) 173-189.

Lazaridis, G. (2000) “Filipino and Albanian Women Migrant Workers in Greece: Multiple layers of Oppression”, in F. Anthias and G. Lazaridies (eds.) Gender and Migration in Southern Europe, Oxford: Berg, 49-79.

Lazaridis, G and Psimmenos, I. (2000) “Migrant Flows from Albania to Greece: Economic, Social and Spatial Exclusions”, in R. King, C. Tsardanides and G. Lazaridis (eds.) El Dorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 170-185.

Lazaridis, G and Theotoky, J. (1999) “Undocumented Migrants in Greece: Issues of Regularisation”, International Migration 37 (4) 715-740.

LeBlanc, R. R. (2002) “Camus, Said, and the Dilemma of Home: Space, Identity, and the Limits of Postcolonial Theory”, Strategies 15 (2) 239-258.

Limb, M. and Dwyer, C. (eds. 2001) Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers, London: Arnold.



Lindholm Schulz, H. (2003) The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland, London: Routledge.

Lister, R. (1997) Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives, London: Macmillan.

Mackian, S. (1995) "This Great Dust-heap called History: Recovering the Multiple Spaces of Citizenship" Political Geography (14) 209-216.

Madge, C. (1993) "Boundary Disputes – Comments", Area 25 (3) 294-299.

Marden, P. (1997) "Geographies of Dissent: Globalisation, Identity and the Nation", Political Geography 16 (1) 37-64.

Marston, S. (1995) "The Private goes Public: Citizenship and the New Spaces of Civil Society", Political Geography (14) 194-198.

Marvakis, A, Parsanoglou, D. and Pavlou, M. (eds. 2001) Migrants in Greece, Athens: Ellinika Grammata (in Greek).

Massey, D. (1999) "Spaces of Politics" in D. Massey, J. Allen and P. Sarre (eds.) Human Geography Today, Cambridge: Polity Press, 279-294.

Massey, D. (1994) Space, Place and Gender, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Massey, D. (1993) "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place", in J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and L. Tickner (eds.) Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures and Global Change, London: Routledge, 59-69.

Matthews, K. C (2002) "Boundaries of Diaspora Identity: The Case of Central and East African-Asians in Canada", in P. Kennedy and V. Roudometof (eds) Communities across Borders: New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures, London: Routledge, 68-82.



Mavroudi, E. (2002) Feeling and Being Palestinian in Athens: Transnational Identities, Spaces and Networks, Unpublished MSc Thesis.

McDowell, L. (1992) "Multiple Voices: Speaking from Inside and Outside the 'Project'", Antipode 24 (1) 56-72.

McEwan, C. (2005) "New Spaces of Citizenship? Rethinking Gendered Participation and Empowerment in South Africa", Political Geography (in press)

McEwan, C. (2004) "Travel and Transnational Spaces", in Johnson, NC, Schein, R and Duncan, J. Companion to Cultural Geography, Oxford: Blackwell.

McEwan, C. (2000) "Engendering Citizenship: Gendered Spaces of Democracy in South Africa", Political Geography (19) 627-651.

McEwan, C. (1998) "Cutting Power Lines within the Palace? Countering Paternity and Eurocentrism in the 'Geographical Tradition'", Trans. Inst. Br. Geogr. (23) 371-384.

Meinardus, R. (2002) "Muslims: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies", in R. Clogg (ed.) Minorities in Greece, London, Hurst and Company.

Melucci, A. (1989) Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society, London: Hutchinson Radius.

Menjívar, C. (2002) "Living in Two Worlds? Guatemalan-Origin Children in the United States and Emerging Transnationalism", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 28 (3) 531-552.

Members of the Palestinian Diaspora in Athens (2002) Palestine, The Difficult Road: A Concise Overview of the Palestinian Question



Mestheneos, E. (2002) "Foreigners", in R. Clogg (ed.) Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society, London: Hurst.

Miles, M. and Crush, J. (1993) "Personal Narratives as Interactive Texts: Collecting and Interpreting Migrant Life-Histories", Professional Geographer 45 (1) 95-129.

Minh-ha, T. (1991) When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics, New York and London: Routledge.

Mitchell, K. (2004) "Geographies of Identity: Multiculturalism Unplugged", Progress In Human Geography 28 (5) 641-651.

Mitchell, K. (1997a) "Transnational Discourse: Bringing Geography Back in", Antipode 29 (2) 101-114.

Mitchell, K. (1997b) "Different Diasporas and the Hype of Hybridity", Environment and Planning D (14) 487-499.

Moreiras, A. (1999) "Hybridity and Double Consciousness", Cultural Studies 13 (3) 373-407.

Morris, B. (1987) The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mountz, A. (2003) "Human Smuggling, the Transnational Imaginary and Everyday Geographies of the Nation-State", Antipode 35 (3) 622-644.

Nagel, C. and Staeheli, L. (2004) "Citizenship, Identity and Transnational Migration: Arab Immigrants to the United States", Space and Polity 8 (1) 3-23.



Nagel, C. (2002) "Constructing Difference and Sameness: The Politics of Assimilation in London's Arab Communities", Ethnic and Racial Studies 26 (2) 258-287.

Nash, C. (2002) "Cultural Geography: Postcolonial Cultural Geographies", Progress in Human Geography 26 (2) 219-230.

Nikolinakos, M. (1973) Capitalism and Migration, Athens: Papazisis (in Greek).

Nuttall, S. and Coetzee, C. (1998) Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa, Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Okely, J. and Callaway, H. (1992) Anthropology and Autobiography, London: Routledge.

Ong, A. (1999) Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality, London and Durham: Duke University Press.

Painter, J. and Philo, C. (1995) "Spaces of Citizenship: An Introduction", Political Geography 14 (2) 107-120.

Papastergiadis, N. (1998) Dialogues in the Diaspora: Essays and Conversations on Cultural Identity, London and New York: Rivers Oram Press.

Papadopoulou, A. (2003) "Asylum Seekers and State Interdependence: The Case of Kurdish Migrants in Greece", Paper given at RGS-IBG International Conference, 3-5 September, London.

Pappe, I. (1999) The Israel/Palestinian Question: Rewriting Histories, London: Routledge.



Parry, B. (1995) "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse", in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (eds,) The Post - Colonial Reader, London: Routledge, 36-45.

Pateman, C. (1988) The Sexual Contract, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Perreault, T. (2003) "Changing Places: Transnational Networks, Ethnic Politics and Community Development in the Ecuadorian Amazon", Political Geography (22) 61-88.

Petrakou, E. (1999) "Exploring the Social and Historical Dimensions of Migration in the European Context with Special Reference to the Greek Case" unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations.

Petronoti, M. (2003) Personal Communication, 9<sup>th</sup> June.

Petronoti, M. (2001) "Refugee Populations in Greece: Emerging Discourses and Courses of Action", Paper presented at a conference on The Refugee Convention at 50, organised by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration, 7<sup>th</sup> International Research and Advisory Panel, Johannesburg, 8-11 January.

Petronoti, M. (1998) The Portrait of an Intercultural Relationship: Crystallations, Fissures, Reconstructions (with the contribution of C. Zarkia) Athens: EKKE and UNESCO (in Greek).

Pile, S. (1997) "Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance", in S. Pile and M. Keith (eds.) Geographies of Resistance, London: Routledge.

Pink, S. (2001) Doing Visual Ethnography, London: Sage.



Portes, A, Guarnizo, LE and Landholt, P. (1999) "The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promises of an Emergent Research Field", Ethnic and Racial Studies 22 (2) 217-237.

Pratt, G. (2000) "Research Performances", Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (18) 639-651.

Pratt, G. (1999) "Geographies of Identity and Difference: Marking Boundaries", in D. Massy, J. Allen and P. Sarre (eds.) Human Geography Today, 151-167.

Professional Geographer (1994) Special Issue on Women in the Field, 46 (1).

Psimmenos, I. (2001) "Pathways of Immigration Control: Organisational Culture and Identity Processes in Greece" Paper for IAPASIS (Improving the Human Research Potential and the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base) on Does Implementation Matter? Informal Administration Practices and Shifting Immigrant Strategies in Four Member States, Florence: RSCAS, European University Institute.

Psimmenos, I. and Georgoulas, S. (1999) "Migration Pathways: A Historic, Demographic and Policy Review of the Greek Case", in A. Triandafyllidou (ed.) Migration Pathways: A Historic, Demographic and Policy Review of Four European Countries, Florence: RSCAS, European University Institute.

Psimmenos, I and Kassimati, K. (2002) "Immigration Control Pathways: Organisational Culture and Work Values of Greek Welfare", Paper for IAPASIS (Improving the Human Research Potential and the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base) on Does Implementation Matter? Informal Administration Practices and Shifting Immigrant Strategies in Four Member States, Florence: RSCAS, European University Institute.

Radcliffe, S A (1999) "Reimagining the Nation: Community, Difference and National Identities among Indigenous and Mestizo Provincials in Ecuador", Environment and Planning A (31) 37-52.



Radcliffe, S. (1994) “(Representing) Post-Colonial Women: Authority, Difference and Feminisms, Area 26 (1) 25-32.

Rapport, N. and Dawson, A. (1998) “The Topic and the Book”, in N. Rapport and A. Dawson (eds) Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement, Oxford and New York: Berg 3-17.

Ramirez, B. (2000) “The Politics of Constructing an International Group of Political Geographers and a Common Space of Action”, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (18) 537-543.

Robins, K and Aksoy, A. (2001) “From Spaces of Identity to Mental Spaces: Lessons from Turkish-Cypriot Cultural Experience in Britain”, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 27 (4) 685-711.

Robinson, J. (1995) “White Women Researching/Representing “Others”: from Antiapartheid to Postcolonialism?” in A. Blunt and G. Rose (eds.) Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies, London: Guildford Press.

Rogan, E.L. and Shlaim, A. (eds. 2001) The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rogers, A. (2000) “A European Space for Transnationalism?” ERSC Transnational Communities Working Paper WPTC-2K-07.

Rosaldo, R. (1989) Culture and Truth, Beacon Press: Bolton.

Rose, G. (1997) “Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics”, Progress in Human Geography 21 (3) 305-320.

Rose, G. (1995) “The Interstitial perspective: A Review Essay on Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*”, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (13) 365-373.



Roudometof, V. and Karpathakis, A. (2002) "Greek Americans and Transnationalism: Religion, Class and Community", in P. Kennedy and V. Roudometof (eds.) Communities Across Borders under Globalising Conditions, London: Routledge, 41-53.

Rozakis, CL (1996) "The International Protection of Minorities in Greece", in K. Featherstone and K. Ifantis (eds.) Greece in a Changing Europe: Between European Integration and Balkan disintegration? Manchester: Manchester University Press, 95-117.

Rubin, B. (1993) "The PLO and the Palestinians" in R.B. Satloff (ed.) The Politics of Change in the Middle East, Boulder: Westview Press.

Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I.S. (1995) Qualitative Interviewing: the Art of Hearing Data, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Safran, W. (1991) "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", Diaspora (1) 83-99.

Said, E. (2001) The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After, London: Granta Books.

Said, E. (2000) "Invention, Memory and Place", Critical Inquiry (26) 175-192.

Said, E. (1990) "Reflections On Exile", in R. Ferguson, M. Gever, T. Minh-ha and C. West (eds.) Out There, Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures, Cambridge: MIT Press, 357-366.

Said, E. (1994) Culture and Imperialism, London: Vintage.

Said, E (1986) After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives, London: Vintage.

Said (1985) "An Ideology of Difference", Critical Enquiry (12) 38-58.



- Said (1978) Orientalism, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Salih, R. (2001) "Moroccan Migrant Women: Transnationalism, Nation-States and Gender", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 27 (4) 655-671.
- Sardar, Z. (1998) Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture, London: Pluto Press.
- Sarup, M. (1994) "Home and Identity", in G. Robertson (ed.) Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement, London: Routledge, 93-104
- Sayigh, R. (2001) "No Work, No Space, No Future: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon", Middle East International, 10<sup>th</sup> August.
- Sayigh, R. (1998) "Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History" Journal of Palestine Studies XXVII (2) 37-53
- Sayigh, R. (1994) Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon, London and New Jersey: Zed Books
- Schein, L. (1998) "Importing Miao Brethren to Hmong America: A Not-So-Stateless Transnationalism", in Cheah, BP. (ed.) Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 163-191.
- Shapiro, M. J. (2000) "National Times and Other Times: Re-Thinking Citizenship", Cultural Studies 14 (1) 79-98.
- Shawa, S. (2004) Personal Communication, 20<sup>th</sup> January.
- Sheffer, G. (1999) "The Emergence of New Ethno-National Diasporas", in S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (eds.) Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism, Elgar: Cheltenham, 396-419.



Shiblak, A. (2000) "Palestinian Refugee Communities in Europe: an Overview", Paper given at a conference on Palestinian Refugee Communities in Europe, May, St Anthony's College, Oxford, in association with the Refugee Studies Centre, Shaml (The Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre).

Shiblak, A. (1997) "Palestinians in Lebanon and the PLO" Journal of Refugee Studies 10 (3) 261-274.

Sidaway, J. (2000) "Postcolonial Geographies: An Exploratory Essay", Progress in Human Geography 24 (4) 561-612.

Sidaway, J. (1997) "The Production of British Geography", Trans Inst Br Geogr (22) 488-504.

Sidaway, J. (1992) "In Other Worlds: On the Politics of Research by 'First World' Geographers in the 'Third World'", Area 24 (4) 403-408.

Sifakakis, G. (2002) Speech as part of Proceedings entitled 'Freedom to Palestine. Freedom to her Imprisoned Fighters' in Greek, available online at: <http://users.otenet.gr/~sek/533.htm>

Silvey, R. (2005) "Transnational Islam: Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia", in Falah and Nagel (eds.) Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion and Space 127-146.

Simipoulos, H. (2004) Speech given at conference on 'Immigrants as Workers or as Human Beings?', Zappeion Hall, Athens, 3<sup>rd</sup> February.

Skordas, A. (2002) "The New Immigration Law in Greece: Modernisation on the Wrong Track", European Journal of Migration and Law (4) 23-48.

Skrbis, Z. (1999) Long-Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.



Smith, A.D. (1999) "The Nation: Real or Imagined", in E. Mortimer with R. Fine (eds.) People, Nation and State, London: IB Taurus, 36-42.

Smith, H. (2002) "Greece Unites in Condemnation of Israel", The Guardian Newspaper, 12<sup>th</sup> April.

Smith, RC (2000) "How Durable and New is Transnational Life? Historical Retrieval Through Local Comparison" Diaspora 9 (2) 203-233.

Soysal, Y. (2001) "Changing Citizenship in Europe: Remarks on Postnational Membership and the National State", in Fink, J, Lewis, G and Clark, J. (eds.) Rethinking European Welfare: Transformations of Europe and Social Policy, London: Open University and Sage, 65-75.

Soysal, Y. (2000) "Citizenship and Identity: Living in Diasporas in Post-War Europe", Ethnic and Racial Studies 23 (1) 1-15.

Soysal, Y. (1998) "Towards a Postnational Model of Membership", in G. Shafir (ed.) The Citizenship Debates: A Reader, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 189-221

Soysal, Y. (1994) The Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Spivak, G. (1988) "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.) Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, London: Macmillan.

Spoonley, P. Bedford, R. and Macpherson, C. (2003) "Divided Loyalties and Fractured Sovereignty: Transnationalism and the Nation State in Aotearoa/New Zealand", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 29 (1) 37-46.

Stack, J. F. (1999) in S. Vertovec and R. Cohen (eds.) Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism, Cheltenham: Elgar, 626-654.



Staeheli, L. (2002) "Community, Immigration and the Construction of Citizenship", available online at: [www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/projects/projec27.html](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/projects/projec27.html).

Staeheli, L. and Cope, M. (1994) Empowering Women's Citizenship, Political Geography 13 (5) 443-460.

Stasilius, D. and Bakan, A. (1997) "Negotiating Citizenship: The Case of Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada", Feminist Review (57) 112-139.

Steinmann, S. H. (2005) "Changing Identities and Changing Spaces in Village Landscapes of Settled Pastoralists in Eastern Morocco", in Falah and Nagel (eds.) Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion and Space 91-124.

Tambini, D. "Post-National Citizenship", Ethnic and Racial Studies 24 (2) 195-217.

Thomas, M. (1997) "Discordant Dwellings: Australian Houses and the Vietnamese Diaspora", Communal/Plural, available online at [www.uws.edu.au/research/researchcentres/ccr/ccrdownloads](http://www.uws.edu.au/research/researchcentres/ccr/ccrdownloads)

Thrift, N. (2000) "Entanglements of Power: Shadows?" in J. Sharp, P. Routledge, C. Philo and R. Paddison (eds.) Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance 269-278.

Tölölyan, K. (1991) "The Nation-State and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface" Diaspora 1 (1) 3-7.

Tolia-Kelly, D. (2004) "Locating Processes of Identification: Studying the Precipitates of Re-Memory Through Artefacts in the British Asian Home", Trans Inst Br Geogr. 29 (3) 314-330.



Toxopeus, R. (1997) "Greek Legislation and Refugees" in P. Muus, Exclusion and Inclusion of Refugees in Contemporary Europe, Utrecht: European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations (ERCOMER).

Triandafyllidou, A. (2000) "The Political Discourse on Immigration in Southern Europe: A Critical Analysis", Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology (10) 373-389.

Triandafyllidou, A. (1998) "National Identity and the 'Other'", Ethnic and Racial Studies 21 (4) 593-612.

Triandafyllidou, A. and Petronoti, M. (2001) Immigration Towards Greece, Athens: EKKE and Kastaniotis.

Tzilivakis, K. (2005a) Supplement on Immigration, in Athens News, June.

Tzilivakis, K. (2005b) "No Radical Islam Here", in Athens News, 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

Tzilivakis, K. (2003a) "A Diverse Greece in 2015", in Athens News, 24<sup>th</sup> January.

Tzilivakis, K. (2003b) "Migrants in Legalisation Limbo", in Athens News, 10<sup>th</sup> January.

Tzilivakis, K. (2002) "EU passes Hot Potato to Greece", in Athens News, 15<sup>th</sup> November.

Turki, F. (1994) Exile's Return: The Making of a Palestinian American, New York: Free Press.

Turki, F. (1988) Soul In Exile: Lives of a Palestinian Revolutionary, New York: Monthly Review Press.



Uglerod, O. F. (ed. 2002) Difficult Past, Uncertain Future: Living Conditions Among Palestinian Refugees in Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon, Oslo: Fafo.

Valentine, G. (2001) Social Geographies: Space and Society, Harlow: Pearson.

Valentine, G. (1999) "Imagined Geographies: Rethinking the 'Human' in Human Geography", in D. Massy, J. Allen and P. Sarre (eds.) Human Geography Today, Cambridge: Polity, 47-61.

Valins, O. (2003) "Stubborn Identities and the Construction of Socio-Spatial Boundaries: Ultra Orthodox Jews Living In Contemporary Britain" Trans Inst Br Geogr. 28 (2) 158-175.

Vertovec, S. (1999) "Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism", Ethnic and Racial Studies 22 (2) 447-462.

Vertovec, S. (2001) "Transnational Social Formations: Toward Conceptual Cross-Fertilization", ESRC Transnational Communities Research Programme WPTC-01-16.

Wahlbeck, Ö. (1998) "Transnationalism and diasporas: the Kurdish Example", Paper presented at the International Sociological Association XIV World Congress of Sociology, July 26-August 1, Montreal, Canada, available online at: [www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/wahlbeck.pdf](http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/working%20papers/wahlbeck.pdf)

Watson, E. (2004) "What a Dolt One Is: Language Learning and Fieldwork in Geography", Area 36 (1) 59-68.

Weighill, M. (1999) "Palestinians in Exile: Legal, Geographical and Statistical Aspects, in Karimi and Cotran (eds) The Palestinian Exodus: 1948-1998, Reading: Ithaca Press, 7-37.



Welsch, W. (1999) "Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today", in M. Featherstone and S. Lash (eds.) Spaces of Culture: City-Nation-World, London: Sage, 194-214.

Werbner, P. (2002) "The Place which is Diaspora: Citizenship, Religion and Gender in the Making of Chaordic Transnationalism", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 28 (1) 119-133.

Werbner, P. (2000) "Introduction: the Materiality of Diaspora – Between Aesthetic and 'Real' Politics", Diaspora 9 (1) 5-20.

Werbner, P. (1998) "Diasporic Political Imaginaries: a Sphere of Freedom or a Sphere of Illusions?" Communal/Plural 6 (1).

Werbner, P. (1997) "Essentialising Essentialism, Essentialising Silence: Ambivalence and Multiplicity in the Constructions of Racism and Ethnicity", in P. Werbner and T. Modood (eds.) Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 226-254.

Wimmer, A. and Glick Schiller, N. (2002) "Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences", Global Networks 2 (4) 301-334.

Wise, J. M. (2000) "Home: Territory and Identity", Cultural Studies 14 (2) 295-310.

Wong, L. (2001) "Home away from Home? Transnationalism and the Canadian Citizenship Regime, in P. Kennedy and V. Roudometof (eds) Communities across Borders: New Immigrants and Transnational Cultures, London: Routledge, 169-181.



Wong, Y.R. (2002) "Reclaiming Chinese Women's Subjectivities: Indigenizing 'Social Work with Women' in China through Postcolonial Ethnography". Women's Studies International Forum 25 (1) 67-77.

Yasin, A. Q. (1999) "Palestinians in Egypt", al-Majdal, June (2) available online at: [www.badil.org](http://www.badil.org)

Yeoh, B. and Huang. S. (2000) "Home and Away: Foreign Domestic Workers and Negotiations of Diasporic Identity in Singapore", Women's Studies International Forum (23) 4, 413-429.

Yeoh, B and Willis, K (1998) "Singapore Unlimited: Configuring Social Identity in the Regionalisation Process, Transnational Communities Research Working Paper WPTC-98-11.

Young, IM. (1990) "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference", in Nicholson, LJ. (ed.) Feminism/Postmodernism, London: Routledge.

Young, R. (2001) Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction, Oxford: Blackwell.

Young, R. (1995) Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Culture, Theory and Race, London: Routledge.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2001) "Nationalism, Feminism and Gender Relations", in M. Guibernau and J. Hutchinson (eds.) Understanding Nationalism, Cambridge: Polity Press, 120-141.

Yuval-Davis, N. (1997) Gender and Nation, London: Sage.

